

12 D, 1790
S E R M O N S

ON SEVERAL

IMPORTANT SUBJECTS.

BY

The Rev. SLOANE ELSMERE, D.D.
Late Rector of CHELSEA.

V O L. II.



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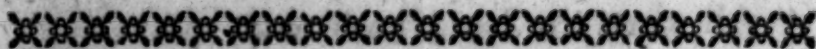
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SECTION FIVE



S E R M O N I.

Of Confirmation.



EPHES. V. 13.

— *In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of Promise.*



HE Dispensations of Almighty God, with regard to Mankind, are in Scripture represented to us under the Notion of Covenants: Thus we find his Dealing with our first Parents represented; for the Prophet *Hosea* tells the Jews, that they, like *Adam*, had transgressed the Covenant.

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When God enjoined Circumcision to *Abraham* and his Posterity, he is said to have given him the Covenant of Circumcision, and to establish his Covenant with him. — The Mosaic Dispensation is all along stiled a Covenant. In the Book of *Exodus* we have a very formal and solemn Account of the making of it: And he (*i. e. Moses*) took the Book of the Covenant, and read in the Audience of the People; and they said, “All that the Lord hath said, will we do, “and be obedient.” And then (according to the constant Custom of those Ages and Nations, in which no Covenant was made without Blood) he took the Blood, and sprinkled it on the People; and said, “Behold the Blood of the Covenant, which “the Lord hath made with you concerning “all these Words.” The christian Religion is likewise stiled a Covenant, and is foretold by the Prophets under that Notion. Thus *Jeremiab* for Instance; “The Days come, “saith the Lord, that I will make a new “Covenant with the House of *Israel*.” And the Author of this Religion is termed the Mediator of a new and better Covenant; and his Blood, the Blood of the Covenant wherewith

with we are sanctified. And still to carry on the Allusion, this christian Covenant (like other Covenants) is said to be sealed. Thus in the Text, the Apostle tells the Ephesians, That after they had believed, they were sealed with the holy Spirit of Promise.

But does God indeed condescend to enter into Covenant with Man? Does that high and lofty one, that inhabiteth Eternity, humble himself so far as to make Compacts and Agreements with the Potsherds of the Earth, the Work of his own Hands? Is he not our sovereign Lord and Governor by the strongest and best of Titles, even those of Creation and Preservation? Shall he then *covenant*, who has a Right to *command*? Shall he stipulate and agree for that Obedience, to which before any such Agreement was made, he had an absolute and inherent Right? Shall he submit to be bound by Conditions, whose *Will* is in every Instance a Law? True indeed it is, that God is our supreme Lord and Governor, and that consequently his *Will* is *Law*, and every Act of Disobedience in us, absolute Rebellion. But yet notwithstanding this, the Almighty has thought fit, (as it were, waving his Sovereignty) to enter into

Covenant with his Creatures, and to lay himself under Obligations to them, upon their performing what is only their Duty. He seems to lay aside the Title of Lord and Lawgiver, and with infinite Condescension *treats* with his Servants, and even submits to Terms. — This Conduct is not only the clearest Proof of the divine Indulgence and Equity in Proceeding, but likewise tends to make Religion an easier Yoke, by giving it a milder Aspect; and by making the Undertaking of it our own *Act* and *Deed*.

But let not the Creature grow insolent upon this Condescension of the Creator. Let us not imagine that we are here (as in Covenants among our Equals) at Liberty to reject the Covenant, if we see proper. By no Means: God has a Right to command; and therefore his entering into Covenant with Man must only be considered as a milder and more gracious Method of publishing his Laws. Whatever therefore is by him stiled a Condition of his Covenant, by us must be regarded as an indispensable Duty. The Language of *Moses*, in the Book of *Deuteronomy*, upon this Head, is perfectly just and accurate: “ God (says he) declared
“ unto

“unto you the Covenant, which he commanded you to perform.”

Since then it appears that Religion is such a Covenant, as all, to whom it is proposed, are obliged to enter into and accept, there can perhaps be no Inquiries more useful than the following,

I. What is the Nature of the Covenant which at present subsists between God and Man.

II. What, the Nature of the original Admission into that Covenant; and,

III. What, the Nature of the Confirmation or Completion of it.

And First. What is the Nature of the Covenant which at present subsists between God and Man?

Now to give a full Answer to this Question, it is necessary to recollect, that the Covenant which is at present in Being, is not the first or original Covenant between God and Man, but is a new one made in consequence of the Transgression of the first. This first Covenant was made with *Adam*, (and in him with all his Posterity) immediately after his Creation. The Promises on God's Part were those of eternal Life and

Happiness: The Condition to be observed on *Adam's*, was a perfect, universal Obedience to all the Commands of God, of what Nature soever, whether moral or positive. This Covenant our first Parent quickly transgressed, by eating of the Fruit of a Tree, of which God had expressly said, Thou shalt not eat: And consequently he and all his Race were subjected to the Curse of the Law, to the Penalties of the Covenant; Death.

This first Covenant being thus violated, and all Mankind, in Consequence of the Violation, subjected to the Punishment annexed to it; the compassionate Father of Mankind, in order to put us again into a Capacity of being happy, founded a new and second Covenant: And this is the Covenant which at present subsists between God and Man.

Now this Covenant was purchased for us by the meritorious Life and Death of Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God: For the Majesty of God, the supreme Governor, being insulted by the Breach of the first Covenant, it was necessary, that Satisfaction should be made to the Justice, and Reparation
to

to the Honour of the Deity; before a new one should be thought of. To accomplish this, God the Father sends his Son; the Son accepts of the Employment; and in the Fullness of Time takes our Nature upon him; and by fulfilling all Righteousness for us, (*i. e.*) by yielding compleat Obedience to that Law which we had transgressed; and by suffering Death for us, (*i. e.*) by bearing the Punishment of our Sins in our Room, paid down the utmost that Justice could demand, vindicated the divine Honour to the full, and obtained for all Mankind fresh Overtures of Mercy, new Terms of Salvation. These new Terms are Faith and Obedience: By Faith is understood, a Belief in Jesus Christ, as the Saviour of the World; an Acceptance of him in that Character, and a firm Reliance on the Efficacy and Sufficiency of the Redemption he hath wrought for us.— By Obedience is meant, not a perfect, compleat, uninterrupted Performance of the whole Law of God (for this would be an impossible Condition, and would consequently render the Covenant of none Effect) but it is such a Performance as is consistent with our Circumstances. It is an honest, sincere, and

heartly Endeavour, to go as far as human Infirmary will permit: It is impossible to do all that we *should* do; all that we *can* do, therefore, shall be accepted in its Stead. Sins of Infirmary are not inconsistent with the Terms of the Gospel, No! nor wilful Sins neither, provided they be forsaken. The first Covenant rigorously insisted on a sinless Obedience, and is therefore called the Covenant of Works, because it required us to continue in all the Works of Law to do them; and because also in this Covenant we were accepted for the Work's Sake, or by Virtue of our Works. The second Covenant admits of Repentance. In the Eye of this Covenant he who sins no more, is as though he had never sinned. This Covenant therefore is stiled the Covenant of Grace; inasmuch as its Terms are so infinitely gracious: For this Title, this other Reason may likewise be assigned, that it is a Covenant of Pardon; a Covenant made with Criminals, which the first was not.

The Promises on God's Part to those who comply with the Terms of this Covenant are, compleat Pardon of all their Sins, a full Recovery of the divine Favour, and everlasting

ing Glory and Happiness in the World to come.

These are the exceeding great and precious Promises which Christ has purchased for us; this the invaluable Covenant, which the shedding of his most precious Blood hath obtained to us. Let us therefore be always careful to look up to Jesus as the Author and Finisher of our Faith; as the Fountain of our Hopes; as the Founder and Mediator of this new and better Covenant.

The christian Covenant being thus explained, I come in the second Place

To inquire into the Nature of our Admission into it.

It is proper that this, like all other Covenants, should have some outward and visible Rite of admitting into it those who are desirous of being Partakers of it. Now this Rite is Baptism, or the washing or sprinkling the Person, in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This Rite of Baptizing our blessed Saviour took from the Jews, who are known to have constantly washed or baptized all Converts or Profelytes to their Law. It is indeed of itself a significant Rite; for it is expressive of that inward Purity which we ought

ought to bring with us to that Ordinance. By using the Name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is signified, into whose Service we are enlisted: By this we shew, into whose Covenant we enter; and these Names being used by their Authority who bear them, is an acknowledging and confirming of the Contract on their Part.

As Baptism is an Admission into Covenant with God, it is fit and necessary that they who are baptized, should solemnly engage to stand to the Covenant. God makes his Promise by the Mouth of his Minister, which Promise he, for his Part, will most surely keep and perform: It is therefore highly reasonable, that the other Party should declare their stedfast Purpose of performing the Conditions, especially considering that the Covenant is only for their Benefit and Advantage. When therefore the Persons to be baptized, are capable of understanding the Nature and Reasonableness of the Conditions of the new Covenant, it is required, that in their own Persons they do solemnly engage to perform them, before they be admitted into it. But if (as is the present Case) the Parties baptized are Infants, incapable of entering

tering into any Engagements themselves, then this Promise is made for them by their Sureties or Proxies: For Baptism being the Entrance into a Covenant, the Admission cannot be compleat unless both Parties consent to the Agreement.

The Use of Sureties in Baptism is near as old as Baptism itself, and the Custom seems to have been taken from the Jews as well as Baptism; for at the Circumcision of a Child there was a Person, who, holding him in his Arms, undertook for him, that he should observe the Mosaick Covenant; and who, upon that Account, was called the Master of the Covenant. There is perhaps no Institution which would tend more to the Advancement of true Religion and Virtue in the World, than this of Sureties, could they be brought to think themselves really obliged conscientiously to perform what they promise. This is one great Design of their Institution: To be a Security to the Church, that they who are admitted within her Pale, should be brought up in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord. One would think that there was Obligation enough upon the Parent to look after the Education of his Child: True!

But

But so great has been the christian Church's Sollicitude about those who have been privileged with Baptism, that she has thought fit to add these additional Securities — But how miserably is the Church disappointed in this her pious and charitable Intention? The careless or irreligious Parent minds not whom he chuses for this important Trust: A Debauchee perhaps engages for the Virtue of his Child, and an Infidel for his Faith; or perhaps the Sureties know as little of the Nature of the christian Covenant, as the Infant for which he promises. They surely must know little of it, who can imagine the sacred Promise they make, to be a light or vain Thing. It is a prevailing Opinion, (even among many whose Education would make us expect a more serious Turn from them) that the whole Business of Sureties is only a Thing of Course, mere Matter of Form. Profane Assertion! What; Matter of Form to covenant with God? Violation of Contract between Man and Man is Impiety enough; But to deal falsely with God, is Sin still more exceeding sinful. This Transaction is between God and Man; and therefore if we falsify here, we do not lie unto Men but unto God.

God. There cannot indeed be conceived any Promises more sacred and solemn than that of Sureties at Baptism; not only as it is expressed in the strongest Terms, but likewise as it is concerning the most important and excellent of all Affairs, even the Salvation of a Soul. But how little the Generality of Sureties think of these Things, their unsufferable Lightness and Giddiness of Behaviour, even during the Time of the Solemnity, do but too plainly demonstrate.

It behoves therefore all who take this important Trust upon them, to be exactly conscientious in the Discharge of it, as they would not be found guilty of trifling and prevaricating with God. They cannot surely think much of instructing those for whom they have promised so largely, in that little Knowledge which is necessary to Salvation; and when they have so done, it will be an easy Matter to observe the last Direction, which is given them, to deliver up their Charges, by bringing them to the Bishop to be confirmed by him. And this leads me to my third Inquiry, which is

Concerning

Concerning the Nature of the Confirmation, or Completion of the christian Covenant.

Now Confirmation is the solemn laying on of the Hands of the Bishop, attended with Prayer for the Gifts and Graces of the Holy Ghost. This Practice is handed down to us even from the apostolic Age: For we read in the History of the Acts of the Apostles, that Persons baptized were always confirmed by the Imposition of their Hands; the Consequence of which Imposition was the Effusion of the Holy Ghost. Thus, in the eighth Chapter, we find, that when the Apostles which were at *Jerusalem* heard that *Samaria* had received the Word of God, they sent unto them *Peter* and *John*, who when they were come prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: Then laid they their Hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. Again; in the nineteenth Chapter we find *St. Paul* laying his Hands upon those he had just before baptized. When they heard this, says the sacred History, they were baptized in the Name of the Lord Jesus; and when *Paul* had laid his Hands on them, the

the Holy Ghost came on them. From this apostolick Practice do we derive the Rite of Confirmation; and because we find this Imposition of Hands was never performed but by an Apostle, therefore has this Office been always appropriated to the Bishops, their Successors.

But perhaps it may be said, that this Imposition of Hands, performed by the Apostles, was only in order to the miraculous Effusion of the Holy Ghost; for that we read that the Consequence of it always was the speaking with Tongues and prophesying: These extraordinary Gifts therefore now ceasing in the Church, this Imposition of Hands, which was the Manner of conferring them, should be laid aside too. It is true, indeed, that the miraculous Effusion of the Holy Ghost was the never-failing Consequence of the apostolick Imposition of Hands; and it is as true, that all such miraculous Effusion has long since ceased in the Church: But yet it is not upon that Account reasonable, that this Rite should be laid aside; and that for this plain Reason, because though the extraordinary Grace of the Holy Ghost is no longer conferred, yet his ordinary Grace is still given.

given. Speaking with Tongues and Prophesying ceased with the Reason of them, but preventing and assisting Grace can never cease, because the Reason of them can never cease; because they are always indispensably necessary to the Discharge of our Duty. Mankind is not now to be converted, miraculous Gifts are therefore withheld: But the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, are still to be conquered, the divine Assistance is therefore still continued. The Spirit of Truth we know abides with us to the End of the World, though he does not see good at all Times to shew himself in a Manner equally wonderful. 'Tis therefore no miraculous Gift that we expect from laying on the Hands of the Bishop; but we expect what is in Truth much more needful for us, the ordinary Assistance of the Holy Ghost, (that is) such a Portion of God's Grace as is sufficient to enable us to work out our Salvation: For if this Assistance (as we know it is) be promised to all that ask it, we cannot but have more Dependance upon his Prayer for it, who is appointed by God to bless in his Name.

But

But there is another Reason for the Continuance of this Rite of Confirmation, which is this: That it is a solemn Renewal of that Vow, which at our Baptism was undertaken for us by others. In the Times of the Apostles the baptized Persons were generally Adults, or grown Persons; and therefore the baptismal Vow was always undertaken by themselves: But now in that Part of the World which is become christian, the Generality of baptized Persons are Infants, who not being capable of making a Promise themselves, it is made for them by others, which Promise, when they come to Age, they solemnly take upon themselves at Confirmation. Adults indeed ever were and still are confirmed, but their Confirmation is not looked upon as their taking their baptismal Vow upon themselves, for that they did in their own Persons at the Font. It is not indeed a mere Repetition or Renewal of that Vow, but rather a solemn Invocation of the divine Assistance, to perform it. — But when we were baptized in our Infancy, Confirmation may be considered as the *actual taking of the Vow*. We do not then repeat or renew a Vow which we had before made in our

own Persons, but we confirm a Promise made for us by others, when we were incapable of making it ourselves. Being now come of Age, we ratify the Contract of our Guardians, we acknowledge the Advantage of the Covenant they made for us, and we gladly embrace the first Opportunity of declaring that we stand to it. And this is necessary to make the baptismal Vow *our own Act and Deed.*

The Enemies of Infant Baptism object to it, that to what Purpose is it to pretend to lay Obligations upon those who are actually incapable of any? How can one be said to be admitted into Covenant, who knows nothing either of the Covenant itself, or of his entering into it? But these Objections are quite taken away by Confirmation; for this Rite answers all the Ends and Purposes of Baptism at riper Years, without depriving us of the invaluable Privilege of Infant Baptism.

There is perhaps no Rite which (were it properly managed) would tend more to Edification, to the Advancement of true Religion and Virtue in the World, than this of Confirmation. For we may perhaps be tempted to think slightly of what was done for us in
our

our Infancy; or it may be, insolently ask what Right any Person had to covenant for us. But Confirmation leaves no Room for this Way of thinking; for however slightly we may think of what passes in our Infancy; we must surely have a better Opinion of what we do ourselves in Maturity: And however we may disregard a Promise made by Proxy, yet surely we must think ourselves bound to observe, what we make in our own Persons.

Again: Confirmation tends greatly to Edification, by giving a serious Turn to the Mind, at that Time of Life when it is most liable to be corrupted. Youth is the Season of Temptation, the perilous Day; the Devil is ever busiest to get Possession of the Heart at this Time, because if he does, he knows he is likely to keep Possession. At this Season, therefore, it is necessary to be armed against Temptation; to be prepared for the Assaults of the Enemy. And can this better be done, than by shewing the Youth that these Temptations which so warmly beset him, that this Enemy which attacks him so furiously, it was long since engaged for him, that he should renounce and abjure? Can he

be better armed than by shewing him the exceeding Reasonableness, and infinite Advantage of that Renunciation which was made for him; and by bringing him to the Altar of God, there in his own Person to repeat the Abjuration.

These are the Advantages of Confirmation and they who are sensible of them, and willing to partake of them, will naturally ask, how they are to be qualified, and prepared for this Ordinance. Now the best Way of fitting yourselves for Confirmation, is diligently to read over, and attentively to consider, the Form of Baptism. You are to remember, that you are now to take upon yourselves, what your Godfathers and Godmothers promised for you; look then and see what it was that they promised. Consider what Questions were then put to them in your Names, and now put those Questions to yourselves. Ask your own Hearts, whether you renounce the Devil and all his Works; the vain Pomp and Glory of the World, and all the carnal Desires of the Flesh? Examine yourselves next, whether you believe all the Articles of the christian Faith, *i. e.* whether you believe in God the Father,

Father, who made you; in God the Son, who redeemed you; and in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifies you; (*i. e.*) who works such Holiness in you, as is necessary to your Salvation.

Again: Your Sureties answered for your Willingness to be baptized. Ask yourselves now, whether you have a just Sense of the infinite Privilege of being admitted into Covenant with God? Whether you are heartily thankful for being entered into it, even before you understood the Value of it? And whether you are now not only willing but rejoiced to ratify and confirm it?

Lastly: You see that your Sureties undertook for you, that you should obediently keep God's holy Will and Commandment, and walk in the same all the Days of your Life. Are you contented to submit to this Condition? Are you sensible of the superior Obligations, your baptismal Vow lays you under to Piety and Virtue, and are you determined to act agreeably to them? If you be, with this fixed and settled Resolution come to Confirmation, both to renew your Obligations, and to beg the divine Assistance to perform them.

Being thus confirmed and sealed with the holy Spirit of Promise, be mindful of the Covenant: Do not as soon as the Solemnity is over, return to your former Negligence and Remissness: Remember that you have now in your Persons vowed Obedience to the Almighty; that you have now voluntarily enlisted yourselves Soldiers and Servants under the Banner of Christ. Be this therefore the Business of your Lives, to give all Diligence to please him who hath chosen you to be his Soldier; and particularly from thenceforwards have the highest Ordinance of Christianity in View, the Lord's Supper. You have now renewed your baptismal Vow by Confirmation; go on to strengthen the good Work by continuing punctually and regularly to renew it in the Lord's Supper to your Lives End. However the Custom is otherwise; a Custom which we lament, but is become too inveterate to be easily cured: But in spite of this Custom, I say, the Qualifications for Confirmation are — The Understanding of the christian Covenant — and a Resolution of complying with the Terms of it. And what more can be requisite for the Sacrament? Whoever *so* understands and

so

ſo resolves, muſt be fit for the higheſt Offices of Chriſtianity.

In a Word, it is impoſſible to be fit for the one, without being at the ſame Time fit for the other alſo; for they are both Renewals of our baptiſmal Vow.

Thus have I ſhewn you the Origin and Uſefulneſs of Confirmation; and how you ſhould behave before and after it. I ſhall conclude with exhorting all who have not yet made this publick Profeſſion of Chriſtianity, not to let ſlip the Opportunity which now offers.

Nothing can better convince you of the great Weight and Streſs which the Church lays upon the Performance of this Rite than this, that ſhe excludes all who are not confirmed, or at leaſt are not ready and deſirous to be confirmed, from the holy Communion. None being in her Opinion compleat Chriſtians, till they are by Confirmation ſealed unto the Day of Redemption.

And let me beſeech all you who ſhall be thus ſealed to perfect the good Work begun in you. With Gladneſs and Singleneſs of Heart to join as ſoon as may be, in the higheſt Act of Religion, with the Faithful,

into whose Society ye have now voluntarily entered. E'er yet the Impression of Piety and Goodness received from this Ordinance, begin to decay, to strengthen and renew them by partaking of the other: To cherish the good Seed now sown in your Hearts, and thereby to engage the Lord of the Harvest, to make it bring forth Fruit unto everlasting Life.

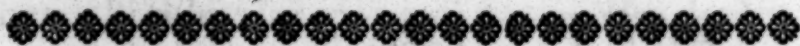


SERMON



S E R M O N II.

The great Things which Christianity has done for us, and the consequent Obligations.



ISAIAH V. 4.

What could have been done more to my Vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth Grapes, brought it forth wild Grapes?

 HE extraordinary Favours and Blessings of the Almighty, bestowed upon the Jewish Church and Nation, are in Scripture very frequently and beautifully

26 *Things which Christianity has done for us,*

beautifully represented to us under the Similitude of a Vineyard, planted, cultivated, and improved with the utmost Care and Industry of its Lord; and the Ingratitude and Disobedience of that People, by the Vineyard's disappointing its Owner by bringing forth not such Grapes as he expected, not such as were answerable to the Care he had bestowed on it, but wild Grapes. The Parable is drawn out at full Length in the Beginning of this Chapter:
“ Now will I sing (says the divine Writer) to
“ my well-beloved, a Song of my beloved,
“ touching his Vineyard. My well-beloved
“ hath a Vineyard in a very fruitful Hill; and
“ he fenced it, and gathered out the Stones
“ thereof, and planted it with the choicest
“ Vine, and built a Tower in the Midst of
“ it; and also made a Wine-press therein:
“ And he looked that it should bring forth
“ Grapes, and it brought forth wild Grapes:
“ And now, O Inhabitants of *Jerusalem* and
“ Men of *Judah*, judge, I pray you, betwixt
“ me and my Vineyard. What could have
“ been done more to my Vineyard that I
“ have not done in it? Wherefore when I
“ looked it should bring forth Grapes,
“ brought it forth wild Grapes?” That is,
What

What have I not done for my People *Israel*? Have I not fenced and separated them from all the People of the Earth, by Statutes and Judgments of a peculiar Holiness and Nature? Have I not distinguished them by unparallelled Privileges and Favours? Have I not led them by the Hand? Have I not carried them in my Bosom? In a Word, what could have been done more, which I have not done for them? Wherefore then, after so much Care, after so peculiar Tenderness, do I meet with so unsuitable a Return? Where is that extraordinary Gratitude and Obedience, which Obligations of so extraordinary a Nature lay you under? This is the Application the Prophet himself makes of the Parable: For the Vineyard of the Lord of Hosts (says he) is the House of *Israel*, and the Men of *Judab* his pleasant Plant: And he looked for Judgment, but behold Oppression; for Righteousness, but behold a Cry.

But though this Parable, in its original Design, has Reference only to the particular Blessings of the Children of *Israel*, as they stood separated and distinguished from the rest of Mankind, yet it is in its own Nature
equally

28 *Things which Christianity has done for us,*
equally applicable to the christian World.
For may it not with equal Propriety be
asked, what more could have been done for
Mankind that Christianity has not done for
it? And consequently the Expostulation of
the Almighty will be in this Case equally
just. Wherefore when I look for Grapes,
bring they forth wild Grapes? Why am I
disappointed in the Fruits which I expected?
Why do not the great Things I have done
for them, met with suitable Returns of Gra-
titude and Duty.

'Tis in this View I consider the Parable in
this Discourse, the Design of which is to
shew you

First. That Christianity has done every
thing for us which we can conceive reason-
able or necessary to be done: That nothing
more can be done to the Vineyard which
Christianity has not done in it.

And secondly. To lay before you the utter
Inexcusableness of disappointing the gracious
Purposes of Heaven, of defeating all its
Schemes for our Happiness; of shewing our-
selves unworthy of the infinite Obligations
we are under by our perverse Disobedience
and Ingratitude. Wherefore when I looked
that

that it should bring forth Grapes, brought it forth wild Grapes. And,

First. I am to shew you that Christianity has done every thing for us which we can imagine reasonable or necessary to be done. And the best Way of proving this, is to shew what were the religious Wants of Mankind before the Appearance of Christianity; and how those Wants are now supplied by it.

Now before the Appearance of Christianity Mankind wanted

First. A full and perfect Knowledge of their Duty. Whatever may be thought of the Sufficiency of the Light of Nature, to the Discovery of our Duty; however it may be exalted and pleaded for by some who are wise in their own Conceits; yet in Fact it is certain (the Experience of four thousand Years demonstrates it) that it never was by any Means sufficient for that Purpose. To convince us of this we need but look into the Works of the most celebrated Writers of the Heathen World; in which though we find many Truths, many bright and shining Passages, yet at the same Time we cannot help acknowledging that great is the Mixture of Ignorance and Error. That the
Nature

30 Things which Christianity has done for us,

Nature of God, and of the Duties we owe to him, our Neighbour, and ourselves, were by no means understood by them, their Discourses on those Subjects abundantly demonstrate. Nay, sometimes we find the most monstrous Principles and Practices argued for and defended. And if such was the Ignorance of the wisest, what can we imagine of the lower Part of Mankind? It is natural to conclude, that they must be buried in the deepest Ignorance and Superstition; and so in Truth they were: Nor is the Case at this Day one Jot better with those who have no other Light, than that of Nature to direct them.

The first Thing then necessary, in order to the Reformation of Mankind, was to give them a full and compleat Knowledge of their Duty; and this Christianity has done in the most perfect Manner. It has given us true and just Notions of the supreme Being and his Attributes; it has explained to us the Natures of the several Duties we owe to God, our Neighbour, and ourselves: The christian Law is at once plain and elevated. Whatsoever Things are true, whatsoever Things are honest, whatsoever Things are just,

just, whatsoever Things are pure, whatsoever Things are lovely, whatsoever Things are of good Report; if there be any thing virtuous, any thing praise-worthy, all these are by Christianity laid before us in the clearest, and pressed upon us, in the strongest Terms. We must no longer plead Ignorance of our Duty in Excuse for transgressing it; when all that is required of us, is written in such fair and legible Characters, that he who runs may read it.

Nor has Christianity given us only a compleat and perfect Law; it has furnished us likewise with the brightest and the noblest Example of Obedience to it.

Example is of more general Use than Precept: We will imitate, when we will not be instructed. By *Precept* the Beauty and Excellence of Virtue and Goodness are *asserted*: — In *Example* they are *seen*. It was an old Objection that the Philosophers did not observe their own Precepts; and this single Objection had such Weight with the Bulk of Mankind, that it rendered all their fine Sayings utterly vain and ineffectual: What they taught by their Lectures, they were sure to undo by their Practice.

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30 Things which Christianity has done for us,

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But

32 *Things which Christianity has done for us,*

But against the christian Lawgiver there lies no such Exception; for he taught nothing but what he practised. To obey his Commands, and to follow his Steps, is one and the same Thing.

Again; Every Man who has any Reflection must be sensible of his Weakness and Infirmary; of his utter Incapacity perfectly and thoroughly to discharge what he well knows to be his Duty. He finds a Law in his Members, warring against the Law of his Mind, and bringing him into Captivity to the Law of Sin. He feels the Flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the Flesh, so that he cannot do the Things which he approves. For these Reasons (I say) every Man must acknowledge that he is not sufficient of himself to do any thing as of himself. But before the Appearance of Christianity, whither should he go for Assistance? The Light of Nature shewed him in many Cases what he should do, but it could promise him in *no* Case any further Assistance in the doing it, but the bare Strength of Nature. But Christianity instructs us to whom in this our Extremity we shall apply for Aid. It tells us that the
Spirit

Spirit of God worketh in us, both to will and to do of his good Pleasure: That the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, shall abide with us for ever, to assist us in the Performance of our Duty which he shall first discover to us, by guiding us into all Truth. And this divine Assistance is promised us upon no more difficult Terms, than of asking it:—And its Continuance we may make sure of; by what alone can be supposed the Intention of asking it—*A sincere and honest Use of it.* Whatever therefore our natural Weaknesses and Infirmities may be; under whatever Incapacities we may labour; all these Defects are abundantly supplied by the Gospel: Though naturally and of ourselves we are not sufficient to do any thing, yet now we can do all Things through Christ which strengtheneth us.

But fourthly. Had Mankind, before the Appearance of Christianity, known their Duty better than they did; yet Obedience was not enforced by sufficient Sanctions. The Sanctions of a Law are the Rewards and Punishments which are annexed to the Observation or Transgression of its Precepts. Now these

34 *Things which Christianity has done for us,*
Sanctions, though no constituent Parts of the Law itself, are yet, however, necessary in order to the Attainment of its End, and that it should have that Influence on the Subject which the Lawgiver intends.

Now Rewards and Punishments in a future State are the only Sanctions which can be supposed sufficient to keep us in the Practice of our Duty; but before the Appearance of Christianity it is well known that a future State of Retribution was denied by many, and doubted of by more.

But this Defect is abundantly supplied by Christianity; for Sanctions, greater than those it contains, it cannot enter into the Heart of Man to conceive: For surely no Happiness can be so transcendent as the everlasting Enjoyment of God, (the supreme Good) in the Company of Angels and Spirits of just Men made perfect. Nor can any Misery be so infinitely dreadful as to be for ever shut out from the Presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of his Power; and to be irretrievably fixed in unquenchable Fire with the Devil and his Angels. These are the Sanctions of the christian Law, infinitely great in themselves,

selves, and (that they may have their full Force and Influence upon our Minds) revealed to us with the utmost Clearness and Perspicuity.

But there is another great Point still behind: A Point as to which the Heathen World was absolutely in the dark; they knew not of the only true and sufficient Sacrifice for the Sins of the World. Sacrifices indeed they offered in Abundance; but as they were *unauthorised* Sacrifices they could not promise themselves that they would be accepted, and therefore for any thing that they knew to the contrary, they might be yet in their Sins.

It is Christianity alone that can make us easy in this important Point: It brings the glad Tidings of a reconciled and propitious Deity. It informs us, that the Son of the most high God had made Satisfaction to the divine Justice, both for original and actual Guilt: That he who was so in the Form of God, as to be equal with God, condescended for our Sakes to take upon him the Form of a Servant, to become Man; and in that Nature to humble himself to Death (the most painful and ignominious Death) the

36 Things which Christianity has done for us,

Death of the Cross. Herein indeed appears the marvellous Loving-kindness of God towards Man. Herein is Love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us, and sent his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins. Greater Love (says our Saviour) hath no Man than this, that he lay down his Life for his Friends: But he himself carried it still further, for he laid his down, for his Enemies: For thus the Apostle tells us, that while we were Enemies Christ died for us.

Thus has Christianity done for us all that is reasonable and necessary to be done. And that we may be sure to have the full Benefit of every thing it has done, there is given us the greatest Evidence that any rational Man can desire of its Truth and Divinity. For whatever Marks are required to prove any Revelation to be divine, those can Christianity produce in their greatest Perfection. Is it required, that the Doctrines of a divine Revelation should be pure and holy, and such as are worthy of God to enjoin. Then we will appeal even to its Enemies, whether there be any Law so holy, any Statutes so righteous as the Christian.

Is it further required, that a divine Revelation should be confirmed by Miracles and Prophecies? The christian Religion abounds in such Proofs. The Miracles of *Moses* (which yet every reasonable Man will allow abundantly sufficient to establish the Divinity of the Mosaic Institution) are not to be compared either in Number or Greatness with the wonderful Works of our Saviour and his Apostles. They did Works which no other ever did; so that if we compare the Miracles of *Moses* with those of Christ and his Disciples, they will be found to have no Glory in this Respect, by reason of the Glory that excelleth. And the Miracles of *Moses* and of Christ are the only real Miracles which ever appear to have been wrought in Defence of any Religion.

And as to Prophecies, no Religion can boast of so many and so antient as the Christian. The first Prophecy concerning it was made immediately after the Fall; and from that Time to the Appearance of the *Messiah* there was a Succession of Prophecies, all pointing to the same great Event. Nor are these Prophecies before the Coming of

38 *Things which Christianity has done for us,*
our Saviour the only Prophecies whereof we have to glory. Our Saviour himself likewise made Predictions; many of which we have already seen are come to pass; and therefore cannot doubt but that the rest will be fulfilled in their proper Season.

So true therefore is the Assertion of the Apostle, that God bore Witness to the Truth of the Gospel both with Signs and Wonders, and divers Miracles, and Gifts of the Holy Ghost. The christian Religion has all the Marks and Characters of a divine Revelation; if then, notwithstanding the christian Religion be not divine, it will be impossible ever to prove any Religion to be so. It wants no Proof that can be expected or desired: The Evidence as it now stands, seems incapable of any Addition; if therefore we will not listen to this, nothing we can conceive, will influence us: However we may flatter ourselves, we would not be persuaded though one rose from the dead.

Christianity then has supplied all our Wants; it gives us a full and perfect Knowledge of our Duty; it encourages us to Obedience by the brightest Example; it assists
our

our Infirmities, and, as it were, forces us to Happiness by the Greatness of its Sanctions: And above all, it informs us of the great and only true Atonement for our Sins; and that all these great Things which it has done for us, may have their due and proper Influence upon us, we have all the Evidence that reasonable Creatures can expect of its Truth and Divinity. May it not now with the greatest Justice be demanded, what could have been done more for Mankind that Christianity has not done for us? The Almighty has abundantly done his Part, let us see that we do ours; that we act suitably to the infinite Obligations we are under. And

To lay before you the utter Inexcusableness of not acting so, was what I in the second Place proposed; and this will best appear by running over the Particulars of the great Things which have been done for us; and by considering what Obligations each of them lays us under to the utmost Gratitude and Obedience.

First then. To what End was so holy and righteous an Institution laid before us, but in order to the Correction and Refor-

40 *Things which Christianity has done for us,*
mation of our Manners: We have now no Cloak for our Sins. Before the Appearance of Christianity we might perhaps pretend that had we known better, we would have acted better. But now the Plea of Ignorance is quite destroyed: The Sun of Righteousness has risen and dispelled all those Clouds of Ignorance and Error, which before hung so thick upon us; we have now a clear and distinct Knowledge of our Duty; a Behaviour then suitable to such Knowledge will surely be required of us.

Again. Did we, before the Appearance of Christianity, want an Example of Obedience? we have now the utmost that we can wish in this Matter: We have a perfect, unerring Example. The Son of God has left us an Example, that we should follow his Steps: Let us look to it, that we endeavour, as far as human Infirmary will permit, to imitate the glorious Pattern.

But thirdly. Does Christianity offer us the greatest Assistance in the Performance of our Duty. How utterly inexcusable are we then if we neglect it? For shall we resist all the Offers of Grace and Assistance which are made

made to us? Shall we do Despite to the Spirit of Grace, and grieve that holy Spirit which maketh Intercession for us, with Groanings that cannot be uttered?

Can we again reflect upon the Sanctions of the christian Law, and not think ourselves utterly inexcusable if we refuse to obey it? Can any thing move us if these cannot? We are urged on to our Duty by all the Arguments that Self-love (the strongest Passion in human Nature) can suggest to us. Life and Death (eternal Life and Death) are set before us in the strongest and liveliest Colours. An Inheritance incorruptible is proposed to us for the raising of our Hopes; and unquenchable Fire to work upon our Fears; Are not the Rewards more than sufficient to make us press on towards the Prize of our high Calling, and the Punishments to keep us back from presumptuous Sin? In short, if these fail, Hope and Fear have no longer any Influence upon us.

Again. Let us reflect upon that astonishing Act of Love, the Son of God's putting away Sin by the Sacrifice of himself; and we shall surely think, that after this, Disobedience
is

42 *Things which Christianity has done for us,*
is the highest and most unparalleled Ingratitude: For shall the Son of God satisfy the divine Justice by submitting to the Death of the Cross? And shall we by our Stubborness and Impenitence render that Death ineffectual? Shall the Son of God, who died for us, be thus trodden under Foot by us? And shall that Blood of the Covenant, wherewith we are sanctified, be counted an unholy Thing?

Once more. Can we reflect upon the Evidence which the Goodness of God has vouchsafed to give us of the Truth and Divinity of the christian Religion, and not think ourselves without Excuse if we disappoint its gracious Designs either by Disobedience or Infidelity.

Can the disobedient Believer imagine he shall escape, because he believes the Gospel to be divine, when at the same Time he defeats all the Ends and Purposes for which that Belief is required. Can we conceive that a bare Belief of the Truths revealed in the Gospel will entitle us to the Rewards of good and faithful Servants? No! Faith without suitable Works will be so far from furthering our Salvation, that it will greatly
increase

increase our Damnation: A wicked Christian is one that knows his Master's Will, and does it not, and therefore shall be beaten with many Stripes. Though we had Faith which could remove Mountains, yet if we had not Charity or good Works, it would profit us nothing. Though we should cast out Devils in the Name of Christ, though in his Name we should do many wonderful Works, yet if we be at the same Time Workers of Iniquity, we shall have our Portion with Unbelievers.

Nor can the Infidel flatter himself with Hopes of Impunity? Since the very worst that is threatened to the *disobedient Believer* is to have his Portion with the *Unbeliever*.

Greater Evidence than that which God has vouchsafed to afford us, of the Truth and Divinity of the christian Religion, no reasonable Man can expect. There is no Circumstance that he can desire in any Evidence, that is not to be found in the Evidence for the christian Religion. The Fault therefore must lie not in the Evidence, but in the Hearts of the Inquirers; for a wicked Heart may most certainly prevent acknowledging

44 *Things which Christianity has done for us,*
knowledging a Truth which is after God-
liness. Lastly,

Let both the disobedient and the Un-
believer consider, that the Gospel-revelation,
as it is the greatest that ever was made, so
also is it the last that ever shall be made to
the Sons of Men. Last of all, God has
sent unto us his Son : If we will not reverence
the Son, there is nothing more can be done
for us : There is no other Expedient to be
used for our Recovery ; no new Offers of
Mercy are to be made ; nor Terms of Sal-
vation to be proposed. If we reject this
Counsel of God, we must die in our Sins ;
for there remaineth no more Sacrifice for
them, but a certain fearful Looking for of
Judgment and fiery Indignation, which shall
devour all the Adversaries of this greatest,
this last Dispensation. To conclude,

If now we recollect what mighty Things
have been done for us, how justly applicable
to our Case is the Expostulation in the Text?
“ What could have been done more to my
“ Vineyard, that I have not done in it?
“ Wherefore, when I looked that it should
“ bring forth Grapes, brought it forth wild
“ Grapes ? ”

“Grapes?” Since I have so abundantly done my Part, why do I not meet with suitable Returns of Gratitude and Duty on yours? If then we know these Things, happy are we if we do them; if we know and believe the great Things of the christian Religion, happy are we if we act suitably to the infinite Obligations they lay us under; but miserable, irretrievably miserable, if we neglect so great Salvation.

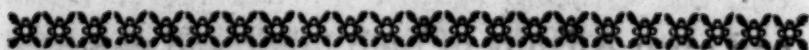


WOMEN



S E R M O N III.

Of the Triumph of christian Faith.



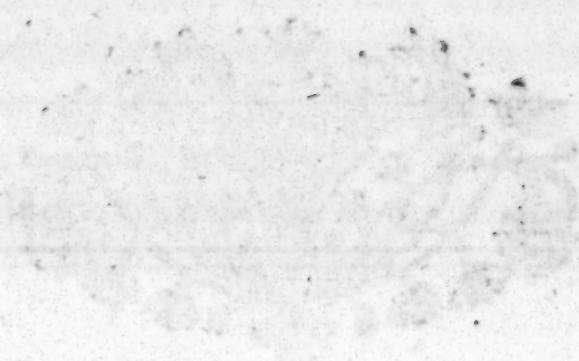
I St. JOHN V. 4.

— *And this is the Victory that
overcometh the World, even our
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AMONG the many Allusions by
which the christian Life is re-
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there is none more frequently or
more beautifully insisted on, than that of a
Warfare.

THE
HISTORY OF THE
CITY OF
NEW YORK
FROM
THE
FIRST
SETTLEMENT
TO
THE
PRESENT
TIME
BY
JOHN
ROBERTSON
1832

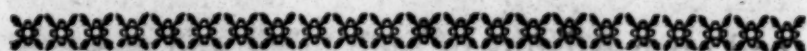


NEW YORK



S E R M O N III.

Of the Triumph of christian Faith.



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48 *Of the Triumph of christian Faith.*

Warfare. Thus are we commanded to endure Hardship as good Soldiers of Jesus Christ, and to follow the Captain of our Salvation; to fight the good Fight of Faith, and to war a good Warfare. The Enemies we are to combat with, are the World, the Flesh, and the Devil. We are to wrestle not only against Flesh and Blood, but against Principalities, against Powers, against the Rulers of the Darkness of this World, against spiritual Wickedness in high Places. And that we may be able to stand and maintain our Ground against all the secret Wiles and open Assaults of such subtle and powerful Adversaries, we are exhorted to take unto us the whole Armour of God. This Armour the Apostle is very particular in describing:

“ Stand therefore (says he) having your
 “ Loins girt about with Truth, and having
 “ on the Breast-plate of Righteousness; and
 “ your Feet shod with the Preparation of the
 “ Gospel of Peace: Above all, taking the
 “ Shield of Faith, wherewith ye shall be
 “ able to quench all the fiery Darts of the
 “ wicked; and take the Helmet of Salvation,
 “ and the Sword of the Spirit, which is the
 “ Word of God: (and that God would
 “ graciously

"graciously condescend to be our Ally and
"Auxiliary) praying always with all Prayer
"and Supplication in the Spirit, and watch-
"ing thereunto with all Perseverance." This
is the Armour of Righteousness, which, in
this our spiritual Warfare, we are to put on:
And still to carry on the Allusion, the Re-
ward of Victory is a Crown; an incorruptible
Crown: "I have fought a good Fight, I
"have finished my Course, I have kept the
"Faith, (says the same Apostle) henceforth
"there is laid up for me a Crown of Right-
"eousness, which the Lord, the righteous
"Judge, shall give me."

But among the Weapons of our Warfare,
which are all of them, through God, mighty
to the pulling down of strong Holds, we may
observe, that it is the Shield of Faith, to
which the Victory is chiefly owing: "Above
"all, (says the Apostle) taking the Shield of
"Faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench
"all the fiery Darts of the wicked:" In this
War we are to act only defensively; we are
not (out of a wanton Ostentation of Strength)
to provoke our Enemy to the Combat: It is
enough for us, if we can defend ourselves

when assaulted; it is enough for us if we are able (having done all) to stand.

Faith then must have the greatest Share in the Victory, since in this defensive War it is our Shield: In the Text the whole is ascribed to it: "This is the Victory that overcometh the World, even our Faith." In the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, the Power of Faith is exemplified in a long Train of Heroes, who through Faith subdued Kingdoms, wrought Righteousness, obtained Promises, stopped the Mouths of Lions; quenched the Violence of Fire, escaped the Edge of the Sword, out of Weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in Fight, turned to Flight the Armies of the Aliens. Nor was the almighty Power of Faith less manifested in the noble Army of christian Martyrs, who, in the succeeding Ages of the Church, (like their Predecessors in Faith, were tortured, not accepting Deliverance, that they might obtain a better Resurrection. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the Sword: They wandered about in Sheep Skins and Goat Skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented.

The

Of the Triumph of christian Faith. 51

The Histories of the first Ages of Christianity are little else than Martyrologies, little else than continued Narratives of the glorious Triumphs of christian Faith. It supplied the tenderest Age, and Sex, and Condition, with Strength sufficient even to rejoice in the greatest Tribulations, Afflictions, and Distresses, which Man or Devils could invent. They counted it all Joy, when they fell into such Trials and Temptations; and therefore they would not accept of Deliverance, that they might obtain a better Resurrection. Thus were they through Faith more than Conquerors: Thus they went on conquering and to conquer; till at last the Tortures were laid aside, out of meer Weariness to inflict them. Such were the miraculous Triumphs of christian Faith, at the first Appearance of Christianity: And in latter Ages the several Persecutions which Christians have raised against one another, have furnished us with like Instances of the invincible Power of Faith.

But these fiery Trials, (Thanks be to God) are now over: We are no longer called upon to shew the Sincerity of our Faith by resisting unto Blood: The Kingdoms of the World

52 *Of the Triumph of christian Faith.*

are become the Kingdoms of our Lord Christ, and we enjoy the Benefits of his peaceful Reign.

What then! Are we to think the War utterly at an End, because these sharp Engagements are over? May we now forget our Vigilance, and securely put off our Armour, as if the Enemy were totally defeated? By no Means: Our Enemy. is not to be discouraged by any Defeat; he is for ever rallying, and constantly upon the Watch to surprize us, when off our Guard. He is for ever contriving to over-reach us by Subtlety, if he cannot take us by Violence. We have still the World, the Flesh, and the Devil to engage with: The Lust of the World, the Lust of the Eye, and the Pride of Life, are still to be overcome. The rugged and narrow Path of Virtue is still to be trodden; and many Difficulties we shall meet with in our Passage, to be encountred. The Pleasures of Prosperity are still to be resisted, and the Evils of Adversity to be endured. Our corrupt and inordinate Inclinations are still to be mortified and restrained, and every Thought to be reduced to the Obedience of Christ.

Here

Here then is the Faith and Patience of the Saints; here are sufficient Opportunities for the Exercise of our Faith and Courage: Here the whole Armour of God will be requisite, but above all, the Shield of Faith. Here are the powerful Adversaries we are to encounter; but powerful as they are, they will quickly fall before the almighty Power of Faith. Faith has ever proved victorious in the sharpest Conflicts, and therefore we cannot doubt of its Success in less difficult Engagements.

It is the Purpose then of this Discourse, to make out the Truth of this Assertion of the Text, that this is the Victory which overcometh the World, even our Faith. To shew you, how superior the faithful Christian is in all Trials and Temptations; and that he alone can do all Things through Christ which strengtheneth him.

The Moralists comprize the whole of Virtue in two Words; *Sustine et abstine*: Bear and forbear: Bear Adversity with Patience and Fortitude; and enjoy Prosperity with Temperance and Moderation. Let us now take a View of the Christian, and see whether his Faith will not triumph over all

54 *Of the Triumph of christian Faith.*

the Temptations both of Prosperity and Adversity.

Let us view him first in his Prosperity. It is generally imagined that there is but little Virtue requisite to bear Prosperity as we ought: There is no Man but what thinks he has a sufficient Stock for that Purpose: However we may suspect our Virtue in Adversity, we think it will meet with but little Temptation in Prosperity. It is the Furnace of Affliction, in which we think our Virtue is to be tried; and that there is but little Danger that the Prosperity of Fools should destroy them.

But if we consider, we shall find, that there is much more Virtue requisite to bear a prosperous than an adverse Fortune. Adversity is the School of Virtue: It is apt to beget and cherish Virtue in us, while on the contrary, Prosperity has as natural a Tendency to lessen and destroy it. Every Circumstance of Adversity teaches us to be virtuous, and every one of Prosperity tempts us to be vicious. The general Contempt which the Man of Sorrows meets with, teaches him Humility; while the Courtship and Flattery, which are the Attendants of Prosperity,

Prosperity, inflame our Pride: Adversity forces us to mortify those Desires, which it puts out of our Power to gratify; while Prosperity gives a full Swing to our Appetites, which are as boundless as our Power of indulging them. Adversity instructs us in the difficult Lesson of an entire Resignation and Submission to the divine Will; and teaches us to possess our Souls in Patience; while Prosperity is too apt to lift up our Hearts: When we wax fat, we are apt to kick against him to whom we owe our Plenty; when we are full, we often forget the Giver, and say, Who is the Lord? We become conceited and self-sufficient; and too often impute our happy Condition to our own great Abilities; and the same Abilities we think will secure the Continuance of it. In our Prosperity we say, we shall never be moved; and we are so accustomed to have every thing succeed according to our Wishes, that we grow impatient under the least Disappointment; and instead of gratefully acknowledging the manifold Blessings we enjoy, impiously murmur at the least Evil which Providence shall see good to lay upon us.

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These are the Temptations of a prosperous Condition; and Temptations which the Christian alone is, by his Faith, sufficiently enabled to surmount. The Christian cannot, in his Prosperity, be proud and tyrannical; for his Faith instructs him, that the lowest and meanest Mortal is redeemed with the same precious Blood that he is: And that rich and poor, honourable and despised, are equally Members of Christ's Body: His Faith therefore will not let him oppress and insult those for whom a common Saviour died.

The Christian can set Bounds to his Desires, be his Power of gratifying them ever so unlimited: He is taught to crucify the Flesh with its Affections and Lusts; nor does he think that an unreasonable Lesson, when his Faith informs him, that to indulge himself in the Lusts of the Flesh, is to crucify to himself the Son of God afresh, and to put him to an open Shame.

He is not to be deterred by the Pain and Difficulty of conquering his Passions, nor to be seduced by all the Pleasures of indulging them; He sets the Misery of Hell against the
Pain

Pain of Virtue ; and the Happiness of Heaven, against the Charms of Vice. Thus does he weigh them in the Balance together ; and thus does he find, that whatever the World can offer him in Exchange for his Virtue, is lighter than Vanity. He sees that if he should gain the whole World, and by that Means lose his own Soul, he would be an infinite Loser by the Bargain. He sees no Pleasure here, for which he would barter away an exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory ; nor can he think any Evil equal to everlasting Burnings.

Nor can the Christian forget from whose Hand his Prosperity is derived ; his Heart cannot be lifted up so as to overlook the Fountain of his Happiness. He knows he has no Sufficiency of himself, but that whatever he enjoys is the Effect of infinite and unmerited Goodness : His Faith will not suffer him to be intoxicated with his Prosperity ; but is for ever sounding in his Ears, Be not high-minded, but fear. Thus is the Christian sufficiently armed against all the Trials and Temptations of Prosperity ; he is like the deaf Adder, which stoppeth her Ears,

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Ears, and refuseth to hear the Voice of the Charmer, charm he never so wisely.

Let us next view the Christian in Adversity; in that State in which a more than ordinary Degree of Virtue is thought requisite. We shall here also find, that this is the Victory which overcometh the World, even our Faith.

Is then the Christian in Tribulation and Distress? Does the Hand of God lie heavy upon him? In the Multitude of his Sorrows within him, the Comforts of his Faith refresh his Soul. He knows from whose Hand, and for what Reason his Affliction comes: He knows that Affliction cometh not forth of the Dust, neither doth Trouble spring out of the Ground, but that they come down from the Giver of every good and perfect Gift; and flow as necessarily from his Goodness, even as much as what we call his Acts of Mercy and Benevolence: For his Faith instructs him, that the Evils he endures are not laid upon him by one who afflicts willingly, or grieves the Children of Men; but that they are the Chastisements of a kind and tender Father: That he thus corrects us
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for our Profit, that we might be Partakers of his Holiness. This is the Light in which the Christian considers all the Evils of Adversity; he therefore rejoices in Afflictions, in Tribulations, and Distresses. He knows that it is good for him to be afflicted; and therefore he bears the Rod not only with Submission, but even with Thankfulness. All his Concern is to make the right Use of these Chastisements; to endeavour that they may have the designed Effect upon him: That they may work in him that Reformation, which was the gracious Intent of sending them. That instead of being, as they were designed, Means of improving his Virtue, his Frowardness do not turn them into Means of greater Damnation: This (I say) is the good Christian's only Care in his Afflictions; for by Faith he is assured, that if this be the Use he makes of these light Afflictions, which are but for a Moment, they shall work for him a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory. Thus does Faith triumph over Adversity. The good Christian cannot faint in the Day of Trial, while by Faith he looks at the Things which are not seen. He chuses
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rather to suffer the heaviest Affliction, than to enjoy the Pleasures of Sin. He esteems the Reproach of Christ greater Riches, than all the Treasures of the Universe. He can undauntedly follow the great Captain of his Salvation who was made perfect through Sufferings: In all his Distresses he can with Confidence look unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of his Faith, as unto a Saviour and mighty Deliverer. He knows that when this earthly Tabernacle shall be dissolved, he has an House not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens: His Eye is ever intent upon the Joy that is set before him: He has Respect unto the Recompence of the Reward, and therefore counts all Things but Dung, that he may win Christ.

Thus is the good Christian prepared against all the Assaults of the Enemy, from whatever Quarter they come. The Shield of Faith is sufficient to quench all his Darts; it is Proof against all his Charms, and all his Terrors. If we have Faith, as a Grain of Mustard Seed, nothing shall be impossible unto us.

By Faith, we can overcome all the Pleasures and Allurements of the World: It
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opens to us a Prospect of a better Country, that is, an heavenly, and therefore it takes off our Affections from Things on the Earth, and sets them on Things above, where alone it assures us true Joys are to be found. We cannot therefore submit to any Temptation, (however enticing) which we know would rob us of Pleasures, not to be compared with the greatest it can offer. We know also, that the Enjoyment of the Pleasures of Sin, will not only cost us the Happiness of Heaven, but will besides subject us to the Misery of Hell: And the least Thought of this is enough to check the strongest Appetite, and to damp the greatest Pleasures: When therefore the Pleasures of Sin present themselves to our Imagination, we can resist them, stedfast in the Faith: For let Vice be ever so palatable, ever so sweet in the Mouth, yet we know, it will be the Gall of Asps within us. By Faith, we can look through the Disguise, and be fully convinced, that though the Lips of Wickedness may drop as an Honey-comb, and its Mouth be smother than Oil, yet its End is bitter as Wormwood, sharp as a two-edged Sword.

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By Faith, we are Proof not only against the Pleasures, but likewise against the Afflictions of the World. The sure and certain Hope of a Resurrection to eternal Life, is infinitely sufficient to support us under all the Evils and Calamities we can possibly meet with in this Vale of Misery. Our Faith informs us, that the Things concerning us have an End; that our Life, and consequently all the Miseries of it, are short and transient; but our Reward (if we endure Chastisement as obedient Children) incorruptible and eternal. By Faith, we look upon ourselves as Pilgrims and Strangers in the Earth; as Travellers only to a better Country: And therefore we can easily dispense with any Difficulties we meet with in our Way, provided we get safe to our Journey's End. We are so intent upon the Recompence of the Reward, that all the Difficulties of obtaining it are overlooked.

By Faith, we are superior to all the wicked Customs of the World. So much are we governed by the Customs of the World, that they very often over-rule even our Inclinations. In Compliance with these, we do
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not only commit Sins, in which our Souls have no Pleasure, but sometimes even those which they detest and abhor. So willing are we to recommend ourselves to the Favour of Mankind, that there is scarcely any thing so dear to us, but what we will sacrifice for it.

But the good Christian is otherwise instructed: He values indeed the Esteem of his Fellow-creatures as he ought; but he thinks it may be purchased at too dear a Rate. His Faith informs him, that the Favour of his God is of infinite greater Consequence to him, than that of a Man like himself: He will not therefore forfeit the Favour of Heaven, though by that Means he should gain the Friendship of the whole World. Nor will he put all the Threats and Terrors of Mankind in Competition with the Wrath and Displeasure of the Almighty. He will not be afraid of a Man that shall die, nor of the Son of Man, which shall be as Grass, and forget the Lord his Maker. He knows that the Friendship of the World is Enmity with God; that the Friendship of the one is inconsistent with that of the other; and since this is the Case, he cannot hesitate which he shall

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shall choose. No Regard therefore to the Manners of the World, nor Complaisance to the Tempers of those with whom he converses, can make him fall from his Steadfastness: He fears not the Reproach of Men, neither is he afraid of their Revilings. He is not concerned at the ill Usage and Reproach he may, on this Account, meet with from his Companions; for he loveth the Praise of God, more than the Praise of Men. He will therefore dare to be virtuous, however singular; he will not be lewd to be in the Fashion; nor drunk, out of good Humour: Nor will he be deliberately damned, rather than forfeit, what a corrupt World has miscalled, his Honour. Honour and Virtue he takes to be Words of the same Import; and he is persuaded, that this only is true Courage, to be able steadily to pursue a Course of Virtue, and to fear him, who is highly to be feared, notwithstanding all the Infamy and Evil his Integrity may bring upon him: And to act in Contradiction to his Judgment and his Duty, he takes to be the most absolute and genuine Cowardice. If it be Cowardice to be afraid of the Wrath of God, and of eternal Damnation, which is
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the Consequence of it, he confesses he is the greatest Coward: But he knows that it is as much the Part of true Courage to fear, what is really and truly fearful, as it is to despise that which is otherwise. He therefore thinks he has true Fortitude, when to avoid what is truly dreadful, he dares undergo all the Reproach and Infamy which the wicked World will heap upon him. The Praise or Dispraise of Men he thinks not worthy to be compared with the Rewards or Punishments of Eternity.

The good Christian will also dare to maintain the Cause of God and Religion, in the Midst of a wicked and adulterous Generation: He will not be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, but will defend the Honour of God and the Truth of his Religion, however fashionable Prophaneness and Infidelity may be: He will bear no Part in any Conversation, which does so much as border upon Wickedness and Prophaneness: He knows that no Wit will atone for Wickedness, and therefore he is particularly careful that he offends not with his Tongue; and upon all Occasions shews the utmost Abhorrence of every Of-

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fence of this Kind, however disagreeable it may be, either to the Temper of the Age, or of those whom he converses with. In short, he will have Courage to discharge his Duty as a good Soldier of Jesus Christ, notwithstanding all the Opposition he can meet with from an impious World.

But lastly. By Faith we overcome Death: By the Shield of Faith we are able to vanquish even this King of Terrors: The good Christian is so far from being affrighted at him, that he bids him welcome. He knows that the Sting of Death is Sin; and his Faith informs him, that God has given him the Victory through our Lord Jesus Christ: He therefore insults and triumphs over Death; O Death, where is thy Sting? O Grave, where is thy Victory? By Faith, he knows that he that overcometh, shall not be hurt of the second Death; and it is the second Death that gives all the Terror to the first.

The Hour of Death is the Time when human Nature needs the greatest Comfort and Support; and against this Hour of Distress,

stress, the Christian and the Christian only is prepared. He can with Pleasure look beyond the Grave; by the Eye of Faith he can discern the heavenly City, into which, through the Gates of Death, he is to enter: By Faith, he sees the Heavens open, and Jesus standing at the Right Hand of God, ready to receive him into the Joy of his Lord.

This then is the Victory which overcometh the World, even our Faith: It is our Faith; it is our stedfast Belief of the christian Religion, and of all the Promises and Threatnings contained in it, that can alone make us triumph over all the Pleasures and Troubles of Life: Our Faith is our Defence in Prosperity, and our Support in Adversity. Christians are of all Men most happy, by having, in all Circumstances, something whereon to stay: We can therefore never put too great a Value upon our most holy Religion, which is thus wonderfully calculated both for our temporal and eternal Happiness: We can never be too earnest and importunate with our Lord, that he would encrease our Faith: We can never be

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too much upon our Guard against those ungodly and unreasonable Men, who having no Faith themselves, maliciously endeavour to overthrow ours: We should look upon these Men, as plotting against our Happiness; as endeavouring to rob us of our only Comfort and Support here, the sure and certain Hope of Happiness hereafter.

A Christian can tell his Disciple, that, by bringing him over to the Faith, he consults his temporal and eternal Happiness: While the Infidel robs his Profelyte of both. He will tell him indeed that he rids him of the Terrors of another World; but then at the same Time that he sets him free from the Fear of Misery, he deprives him of the Hopes of Happiness; and the Despair of this Happiness is a greater Evil than was the Fear of Misery. For the Misery, it is in our Power to avoid; that is, to affect only those who do not keep within the Bounds of Religion and Virtue: And to keep within these Bounds it is even our present Interest. Infidelity then makes us doubly miserable; it not only deprives us of all Hopes of Happiness hereafter, but it increases likewise our
present

present Misery, by strengthening the Temptations to Vice, and destroying the Principle of Virtue.

Why then all this Zeal to propagate Infidelity: We are told, it is to undeceive us: That Error is so unbecoming a reasonable Creature, that it ought zealously to be rooted out. But is Christianity demonstrated to be an Error? Are they themselves satisfied that it is so? It is the common and usual Property of Error, to be pernicious; and of Truth, to be salutary to Mankind: It is therefore an honest Prejudice in Favour of Christianity, that it is an Institution the most beneficial to Mankind that can enter into the Heart of Man to conceive: And that if it be an Error, human Nature is left abandoned, without Comfort, without Support, destitute, afflicted, tormented.

The true Reason of their absurd and preposterous Zeal is this: They find, that by their casting off Christianity, they are distracted and miserable themselves; and like the evil Spirits, their Predecessors in Apostacy, think their own Misery would be lessened, if they could seduce others into it: They

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are also like the troubled Sea when it cannot rest; whose Waters cast up Mire and Dirt.

The Infidel is an easy Prey to every Temptation: He is open to every Assault of Pleasure, and comfortless under every Stroke of Adversity: And in the Hour of Death, in the utmost Confusion, Uncertainty, and Distraction, when he is under no Temptation to Vice, he may fancy, that Virtue is its own Reward. When he is in Prosperity, he may think it unmanly and unphilosophical not to bear Adversity with Patience: And in perfect Health he may laugh perhaps at the superstitious Fear of Death, but let him be assaulted with Temptation, let him be proved by Affliction, let him have an immediate Prospect of Death, and then we shall see the Force and Influence of his former Reasonings.

The Infidel has no Root in himself; no Foundation to go upon; and therefore it is no Wonder, if in the Time of Trial and Temptation he should fall away: He is like an House, which is built upon the Sand; upon which, when the Rain descends, and the

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the Floods come, and the Winds blow, it must certainly and unavoidably fall. But the good Christian, who is built up upon his most holy Faith, is like an House which is built upon a Rock ; upon which though the Rain descends, and the Floods come, and the Winds blow, yet it cannot fall, for it is founded upon a Rock.

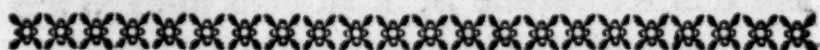


S E R M O N



S E R M O N IV.

*Necessity of the Supposition of
a future State, in all re-
ligious Reasonings.*



2 COR. iv. 18.

*While we look not at the Things which
are seen, but at the Things which
are not seen.*



HERE is nothing which Man
is oftener guilty of than partial
and inadequate Consideration. He
is rash and precipitate in his
Judgment, struck with the first Appearances
of

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of Things; and in such Haste to come to
some Conclusion, that he will not stay to
examine his Subject in its full Extent.

This Temper must necessarily be attended
with very pernicious Consequences: On our
temporal Affairs it has often a very ill Effect;
for these are frequently, for Want of a due
and full Consideration, brought into such a
Condition, as is too ruinous for second
Thoughts to mend.

But did its Influence stop here, it would
be in some Sort pardonable; every thing
merely temporal, being really contemptible:
But the Misfortune is, it extends itself to the
weightiest of all Concerns, even to Religion.
Here, if ever it might be reasonably expected,
we should be careful and attentive: However
flight and hasty our Reflection upon other
Things may be, Religion at least seems to
deserve a thorough and deliberate Consideration.
True indeed! It deserves it, but it
does not meet with it; for we are perhaps
in nothing more indifferent, nor ever in
greater Haste, than when upon this Subject.

What must be the Consequence of this
Conduct, I need not say: Every Man sees
that

that Error must infallibly attend it; and in an Affair of such Importance as Religion, how great, how dangerous must Error be? If this Light which is in us, be Darknefs; how great is that Darknefs?

But Religion, besides its Importance, is likewise a large and extensive Subject; and upon that Account likewise demands, if we mean to understand it, a careful and deliberate Consideration. We must remember to take the whole of it into Consideration, to examine it in its full Extent; not to dwell upon any one Part of it, so as to overlook the rest; not to separate the Branches of it, even in Imagination; but always to view them together, and to consider them in their true Light, *i. e.* in a State of Connection with, and Dependence upon, each other.

It is to this separate View of Things, which should never be disjoined, that most of our religious Errors owe their Birth. It is well known, that Things have often very different Aspects, as they stand alone, or in Company with others. Things which Nature designed to be together, should never be divided. They cannot indeed be divided without destroying their Beauty and Perfection.

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fection. — And as it is in the natural, so it is likewise in the moral World. To be sensible of its Beauty and Perfection, the whole Scheme must be viewed together; No one Part of it can be separated from the rest, without a total Diffolution. To make this clear by an Example — The Things which are seen, and the Things which are not seen, divide the whole Creation; present and future take in the whole of Existence. And now between these there is a necessary Relation, an inseperable Connection, with regard to Morality. The moral System arises from the Union and Mixture of these; 'tis the Result of both: And therefore in all our Inquiries into Morality, we should be sure to keep them always together: For the Moment we lose Sight of either, the Chain is broke, and the System becomes defective.

Now the Things which are seen, having the Advantage of being present, do therefore make more strong and forcible Impressions on us, than those which are not seen. And hence it comes to pass, that our Reasoning too often turns wholly upon the present State; the future invisible State being absolutely overlooked, and left out of the Question.

stion. The Things which are seen are obvious, strike our Senses, and therefore employ us; but the Things which are not seen, being future and at a Distance, never once come into Mind. — Now it is evident that this is a very partial Way of Proceeding. It is indeed but a half Consideration, and therefore it is impossible but that Things must appear in a wrong Light to us. The Scheme of Morality can never appear consistent in this View: No! That is founded in the Nature of Things taken together: It includes future, as well as present; the Things which are not seen, as well as those that are.

It is evident in the moral Writings of the antient Philosophers, that many of their Mistakes proceeded from this partial Way of thinking. They reasoned only from what was visible; the present only took up their Thoughts; and from thence came their Difficulties and Perplexities: Many of which had been clearly and quickly solved, had they gone a little farther than the Objects of Sense, and taken Futurity into their Account. And the universal Corruption of Manners in all Ages, must in great Measure be ascribed to Men's bounding their Views within the
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narrow Limits of this Life; to their considering only the Things which are seen, and placing all their Happiness in them, exclusive of all Thoughts of any thing hereafter; to their inverting the Apostle's Rule, and looking not at the Things which are not seen, but at the Things which are seen.

Now it is the Design of this Discourse to remove those Mistakes which flow from neglecting the Consideration of a future State, by shewing you how absolutely and indispensably necessary it is, that a Supposition of that State should accompany all our Reasonings about Religion and Morality.

And first. It is necessary that the Supposition of a future State should accompany our Reasons in Religion and Morality; because without that Supposition, many of the Proceedings and Dispensations of Providence are not to be accounted for. — Indeed our Creation itself seems to require this Supposition: For without it, it appears to have no End or Design; at least, not to have an End and Design suitable to the Perfections of such a Being, as we must suppose the Creator is. There appear, it is true, numberless Marks of Art and Contrivance in the several Parts of
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the material World; but these, without a sufficient End and Purpose of the whole, would not satisfy us of the Agent's Wisdom.

On the contrary, the more extraordinary the Means are that are made use of, the greater and the nobler is the End that we expect: The greater therefore the Wisdom, which is displayed in contriving this Frame, the more we are induced to suppose a suitable End of the Contrivance. But if there be no future State, it will be difficult to discover this End: If there be not Things, not as yet seen, it will be hard enough to account for the Existence of those that are seen. For can we suppose a Being of infinite Perfection, to produce so noble a Creature as Man originally was, only to taste Life and lose it? Is this an End, worthy of those Powers and Faculties he has endowed him with: Or is it worthy infinite Wisdom to produce such a glorious Apparatus as Heaven and Earth make, only for him, for a few Days to take his Pastime therein? No! this could not be conceived; even upon the Supposition that Man lived absolutely and compleatly happy for the little Time he did live. But if besides the Transitoriness of Life, we take into
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our Account the Misery of it likewise ; without the Supposition of another Life, the End of our living at all, will be still harder to be come at ; for then it should seem we were born for Misery. Then we should be designed not to sport, but to languish for a Day : There would then appear no other End of our Creation, but to make us once sensible of Evil. On this Supposition the Shortness of Life would be the only Blessing of it. — Can then the Misery of the Creature be supposed the Design of the Creator ? No, surely : It were Blasphemy to imagine it. The great Creator is all-sufficient to his own Happiness, and can therefore have no other Reason for Creation, but the communicating of Happiness : And if this be his End, it is evident, that in the present State and Condition of Things, that End is by no means obtained. For if in this Life only we have Hope ; Man, the noblest Creature of the World, is the most miserable in it too. — We must then look somewhere else for the End of the Creator, the Happiness of the Creature. Here it is not to be found : Were Men even happy here as they could be ; so low and transitory a Happiness appears unworthy

worthy to be the ultimate End of the supreme Wisdom. And if so; the present miserable State of Things is surely much more so — Besides Goodness, another Perfection of the Deity, steps in here, and forbids in stronger Terms the injurious Supposition.

To reconcile then the divine Proceedings with the divine Attributes, we must carry our Thoughts a little further than the present State and Condition of Nature. We must extend our Prospect beyond the Things which are seen, unto the Things which are not seen. We must suppose another Life after this; and if we do so, all Difficulties clear up; and the divine Perfections shine out in full Lustre. We then see a Design in the Creation truly worthy of the infinite Wisdom and Goodness of the Creator: We do not then see an excellent and a noble Creature formed for a low and short-lived Pleasure; nor do we behold him endowed with Powers and Faculties to answer very little or no Purpose. No! We now perceive, that Man is built for Eternity; that an everlasting Being is designed him, and likewise a Happiness commensurate to his Being. This

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is an End worthy of producing him; and for the Enjoyment of which he can never be too largely and liberally furnished: It is to make him susceptible of the exalted Happiness intended him, that all his great and noble Powers and Faculties are given him.—Nor need we wonder, that a Creature for whom so great Things are designed hereafter, should be so abundantly provided for here; that he should have his present Habitation so commodious and magnificent. The Goods and Beauties of the Creation are worthily designed as Accommodations and Entertainments for this Favourite of Heaven, during his Journey to his proper Country.

And as to the Evils and Miseries of this Life, the Consideration of another takes off the Objection from hence against the Goodness of Providence; for from hence it appears, that the Happiness of the Creature may be the Design of the Creator, notwithstanding all the Evils and Calamities of Life. The Origin of Evil is in ourselves, and therefore ourselves we must thank for it. But from whencesoever it proceeds, and for whatever Reasons the divine Wisdom may think fit at present to subject us to it,
yet

yet there is another Life at hand: A new World is ready to open to us; a World, in which all the Evils of this shall be redressed and compensated; and in which, the ultimate End of the Creator, the everlasting Happiness of his Creatures, shall be obtained.

The Consideration of a future State, as it thus vindicates the divine Wisdom and Goodness in the Creation of the World, so does it likewise account for all those seeming Irregularities and Inequalities which are permitted in the Government of it.— There is no Objection against the Wisdom, Justice and Goodness of Providence, which has in all Ages been more insisted on, or has more perplexed the Mind of Man, than the unequal and promiscuous Distribution of Good and Evil to the righteous and the wicked. The Observation that there is but one Event to all, has been urged as a Discouragement to Virtue; inasmuch as it appears that the Governor of the World takes no Cognisance of it, and has no Regard to it. In the Works of the antient Sages we find frequent Mention of this Objection to Providence; and in the sacred Volume we find it to have been a

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Rock of Offence, to the great and holy Men of old. We hear them all in their several Ages complaining of this unaccountable Inequality, and expostulating with the Almighty as to the Reasonableness of it. "Behold," says *David*, these are the Ungodly that prosper in the World; they increase in Riches; then verily I have cleansed my Heart in vain, and washed my Hands in Innocency; for all the Day long I have been plagued, and chastened every Morning." If this be the Case, that Vice is prosperous, and Virtue and Piety afflicted, then what Profit is there in serving God? Then all my Watchings and Fastings have been to no Purpose; all my Religion has been thrown away. And after him his Son *Solomon* remarks, "That this is an Evil among all Things that are done under the Sun; that there is one Event to all; that all Things come alike to all; that there is one Event to the righteous and to the wicked; to the good, and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not; that as is the good, so is the Sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an Oath."

And

And to mention but one Instance more, the Prophet *Jeremiah* thus with great Humility expostulates: "Righteous art thou, O Lord, "when I plead with thee; yet let me talk "with thee of thy Judgments: Wherefore "doth the Way of the wicked prosper? "Wherefore are all they happy, that deal "very treacherously?" And in Truth, if we look only at the Things which are seen, without any Regard to those which are not seen; if we reason only upon what is present, without any Relation to Futurity, it will be very difficult, if not impossible, to account for the divine Conduct in this Particular. For if there be no Life after this, but the whole of our Being is included in the present, then it follows, that the supreme Being has no Regard to the moral Characters of his Creatures; that Vice and Virtue are Things quite indifferent to him: It follows, that the Judge of all the Earth does not do right, inasmuch as he makes no Difference between the most faithful Servants and most outrageous Rebels. — But these are shocking Consequences, and not even to be mentioned without Horror. How then are they to be

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avoided? There is but one possible Way of clearing up this Matter, and that is, the Supposition of a future State. And this indeed will effectually do it; for then Rewards and Punishments may be reserved till that Time. Upon that Supposition it does not follow, that the vicious are not punished, nor the virtuous rewarded, because they are not punished or rewarded *here*. It does not follow, that the Judge of all the Earth does not do right, because he does not even *now* in this present World make bare his Arm, in bestowing Favours on his Servants, and taking Vengeance on his Enemies. These Consequences, I say, will not follow; for if there be another State, that may be the State of *Recompence*, and this of *Probation*. And so in Truth it is: We are in this State upon our good Behaviour, according to which it shall fare with us in the next. Here, Wheat and Tares grow up together, both ripening against the Time of the Harvest. Then it is that the divine Justice will display itself in the great and everlasting Distinction, which will be made between the righteous and the wicked; for then the Lord of the Harvest

Harvest will say to the Reapers, Gather first the Tares, and bind them in Bundles to burn them; but gather the Wheat into my Barn.

Let this Reflection then at present content us; let this confound the prosperous Villain; cheer up dejected Virtue, and abundantly convince us of the divine Wisdom, Goodness, and Justice, in the Government of the World:

We see then how necessary it is, that in all our Reasonings about the Dispensations of Providence, we should look beyond the Things that are seen, and take a future State into our Reckoning: For that future State is as much the Design and Intention of Providence as this; and the Existence of Man is divided between these States: To judge therefore of the Oeconomy of Providence from the View only of the present State, without any Regard to the future, is to judge of the whole from a Part; and is like the Proceedings of those confident Readers, who take upon them to pronounce of the Merits of an Author, from a Perusal only of a few Pages in the Beginning of his Work.

But secondly. It is necessary that the Supposition of a future State should accompany our moral Inquiries; because without

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that Supposition there is no such Thing as Happiness attainable by Man. — The first Question in Morality is this: In what does the supreme Happiness of Man consist? The ultimate End of all his Actions is Happiness: What is then that Happiness, and where is it to be found? The Philosophers have racked their Invention upon this Subject; but all that they have said upon it, may nevertheless be reduced to these three Opinions: That Happiness consists either in Pleasure only, or in Virtue only, or in both, joined with the Goods of Fortune. Now in none of these Opinions is there any Mention made of, or Regard had to, a future State. And for this Reason it is, that all these Accounts of Happiness fall short of the Mark: They looked only at the Things that are seen, without any View to the Things which are not seen. They considered this Life as the only Scene of Existence, and reasoned upon that Supposition. They therefore mistook the Question; for the true State of it is, what is the Happiness of Man, considered with regard to both Worlds, with regard to the full Extent of his Being; whereas they
put

put it, what is the Happiness of Man with respect to this Life only, exclusive of, and separate from any Relation to another. Now to the Question put after this Manner, the true and proper Answer is, There is no such Thing as Happiness at all; and this will best appear by examining their own Accounts of it. Now as to that Opinion which places the supreme Happiness in Pleasure; that is so low an Account of it, so beneath the Dignity of Mankind, that it is an Affront to human Nature to insist upon it. — As for those who make the Goods of Fortune essential to it, they will certainly find, that these are of too fickle and precarious a Nature to be trusted to; and therefore a Felicity which depends upon them is of very little Value. — What shall we then say of Virtue? Will that answer our Purpose? At first Sight truly, it bids fair for it. — Virtue is its own Reward, and abundantly sufficient to its own Happiness. But from whence can all this Self-sufficiency of Virtue proceed? Is the Happiness which attends it inbred or adventitious? Adventitious, certainly: It proceeds from without; from the Expectation of Happiness, in consequence of the Practice of it;
from

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from the Prospect of the Recompence of the Reward that shall attend it. Rob then the virtuous of the sure and certain Hope of this, and you render them equally capable of Misery with other Men. For what is there in Virtue, stripped of Reward, that can render Misery supportable? What avails the bare Reflection that our Sufferings are undeserved; nay that they are even owing to our steady Perseverance in what is right. What, I say, avails all this? Has the Fire or the Sword less Power upon our Bodies, for these Reflections? No, surely. It must be then something better than these Reflections which can support us in Misery; that can make us triumph over Afflictions. And this can be nothing but the Prospect of future Happiness: This indeed is an Anchor of the Soul: By Virtue of this we may laugh at all the Torments which Men or Devils can devise. It was this Regard to Futurity that produced the noble Army of Martyrs. So St. Paul tells us of himself and Brethren: "For which Cause (says he) we faint not; but though our outward Man perish, yet our inward Man is renewed Day y Day: For our light Affliction, which is but for a Mo-
ment,

“ment, worketh for us a far more exceeding
“and eternal Weight of Glory; while we
“look not at the Things which are seen,
“but at the Things which are not seen.”

Vain then are all Inquiries after Happiness, if made without regard to a future State: For if that be left out of the Account, we have seen, there is nothing in Nature in which it can be placed. — The best Account of Happiness is in short this — That full and compleat Happiness is reserved for us *hereafter*; and that the greatest Happiness *here* consists in the *Expectation* of it.

Thirdly and lastly. It is necessary that the Supposition of a future State should accompany all our Reasonings about Religion and Morality; because without this there is no sufficient Motive to engage us in the Practice of either. — Indeed without this Supposition, the Practice of them would not be consistent with Prudence or common Sense; at least such Practice could not be prudent, when it was in Opposition to our present temporal Interest. For if we act in Contradiction to our present Interest, it is fit we should have some Reason for doing so: But if there be no future Reward, there can be
no

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no Reason for such Conduct; for overlook another World; and our whole Happiness, nay our whole Being, is included in this. If this World then be all that we have to trust to, common Sense will direct us to make the most of it. -- But is there not a Pleasure and Satisfaction in the Practice of Religion and Virtue, separate from the Consideration of any Reward? Is not the Pleasure which arises from the Consciousness of having done right, a sufficient Motive and Encouragement to do it? Most certainly it is; upon the Supposition of a future State, but not without it. For without it, all that Pleasure and Satisfaction have no Foundation. For it is not the bare Consciousness of doing right that gives the Pleasure; (for as Things now stand, we may be conscious too, that we shall suffer very heartily for it) but it is the Consciousness of acting in a Manner acceptable to the supreme Cause: The Consciousness of approving ourselves in his Sight; the infallible Consequence of which, we know, will be the Enjoyment of a Happiness adequate to our Wishes. This is the Source of all that Pleasure and Satisfaction which arises from the Practice of Virtue.

Men

Men may talk as magnificently as they please of disinterested Virtue, but there is in Truth and Nature no such Thing. Heaven has annexed Rewards; Rewards, both natural and positive to the Practice of it, without thereby intending to lessen the Merit of it. Even that pompous Assertion, that Virtue is its own Reward, betrays itself, and confesses a mercenary View: For if Virtue be its own Reward, then Virtue is still rewarded; and it is for the Sake of that Reward, that the Patrons of this Assertion pretend to practise it. No Matter from what Quarter, whether from within or from without, the Reward of Virtue comes: It is enough if it is rewarded—And so it most certainly is, if it is its own Reward.

And, if Virtue is its own Reward then, even in the Opinion of those who maintain this Paradox, there is no such Thing as an absolutely disinterested Virtue; and this is all that was designed by mentioning it. For in Truth it is a false and ridiculous Assertion: The only true Reward of Virtue being that everlasting future Happiness, which God has in Store for those that practise it.

As

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As we have then seen, that without a future State there is no sufficient Motive to the Practice of Righteousness and Virtue; it will be useful to bestow a Reflection or two upon the Force of that Motive, and to see how strong the Obligations are which the Consideration of a future State lays us under. — If we had nothing to do but with the Things that are seen, it would be our Wisdom to make the most of them; but if we are to have any Concern with the Things that are not seen, the same Wisdom will direct us to have Respect to them likewise. This present World is but Part of our Existence; and whatever Reasons we have to provide for a Part of our Being, we have still more and stronger to take Care of the whole. But the Misfortune is, that Men are so engrossed by this World, that like brute Beasts ever prone to the Earth, they do not so much as once look up to that new World, which is designed them. They set up their Staff on this Side *Jordan*, as neither knowing of, nor caring for, any better Country on the other Side. They act, as if their Being was to be determined with their
temporal

temporal Life; they look not beyond the Grave, nor have any Regard to the Things which are not seen.

But if they can spare so much Time from the Farm, and from the Merchandize, or from the Pleasures and Amusements of Life, as to make one cool Reflection. They would do well to ask themselves a few such Questions as these: Do I really believe, that there is any such Thing as a future State or not? Do I believe or not, that when this World and all Things therein shall be dissolved, I shall then have a Being in another and a new Condition? If I do, if I am really and in earnest persuaded of all this, would it not be prudent in me to take some Care to provide for it? I am at present very busy in the Affairs of this World, but am I not as much concerned about those of the next? And shall I not be as sensible of Good and Evil in the next World as I am in this? If so; should not my Well-being in that new World be as much my Care as it is in this? Most certainly. Do I then at present act in this Manner? By no Means: I live in Truth as if I knew of no other World but this! Shall I then continue in this desperate State?

I will

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I will leave it to your own Hearts to make the Answer.

In fine. There is nothing but a Regard to a future State which is sufficient to engage us in the Practice of Righteousness and Virtue; and this is infinitely sufficient. There is no Temptation of the World, the Flesh, or the Devil, so strong, but what this can enable us to conquer; nothing can prove too hard for that Virtue which looks not at the Things which are seen, but at the Things which are not seen; especially if we remember this important Addition, That the Things which are seen are temporal, but that the Things which are not seen are eternal.

S E R M O N



S E R M O N V.

Of future Judgment.



H E B. ix. 27.

— *But after this the Judgment.*



A F T E R what? After Death:
For it is appointed unto all Men
once to die, and after that the
Judgment.

Death then, it seems, is not to put a Pe-
riod to our Existence; No! God forbid:
That is the Hope of the Infidel, the Ungodly,
and the Sinner, or rather their Despair; for
Annihilation, or absolute Destruction of
V O L. II. H Existence,

Existence, can be the Refuge only of the *desperate*; and a Refuge that, which in their Intervals of Reflection, they must also despair of: For a *future Being* our natural *Expectations* and *Apprehensions* suggest to us: — Our *enlarged Faculties* and *Capacities* long after it, as the Hart panteth after the Water Brook. The *Dispensations of Providence* suppose; — The *Attributes of God* demand — And the *Word of God* affirms. In short; every thing *within* and *without* us proclaim this Truth, — That Man is built for Immortality: That though he dies, yet shall he live again: That though his present State be but as a Span long, yet his future shall extend throughout all Ages. In spite of the Mortification he now undergoes, of having his Dust return to the Earth as it was, yet the Spirit shall return unto God who gave it. Of this Tree there is Hope, that though it be cut down, though the Root thereof wax old in the Earth, and the Stock thereof die in the Ground, yet shall it sprout out again. It may indeed not be soon, not till the Heavens be no more; but when that Period comes, then shall our common Lord and Father call, and we shall answer; then shall
the

the last Trumpet awake, and raise us out of our Sleep: A Sleep into which we never more can relapse:

It is one of the Characters which the great Captain of our Salvation gives of himself — “I am he that liveth and was dead, and “behold I am alive for evermore.” Of all Mankind will it one Day be true likewise — That they live and were dead, and are alive for evermore.

All Men shall live for evermore; a never-ending Existence is common to the whole Race; but the Nature and Condition of that never-ending Existence is to be very different: For though all that sleep in the Dust shall arise and come forth, yet some shall come to everlasting Happiness, and some to the Resurrection of Damnation. A Fate, how widely different! Tremendous Difference: And a Difference dependent upon what? Why, upon the different Manner in which the present Portion of our Existence is employed: For they that have done Good, shall enter into Life everlasting, and they that have done Evil, into everlasting Fire.

To make this Distinction, and to make manifest also before Men and Angels, the

Justice and Equity of the Distinction; to make wicked Men self-condemned, and Angels to glorify God, before him shall be gathered all Nations, and the Books of Remembrance shall be brought forth, and all Men shall be judged out of those Things which are written in the Books, according to their Works.

Of this concluding Scene of Nature: — of this solemn and awful Day of Reckoning, recollect with me at present the most material Circumstances. Who is to be the Judge? A Being infinitely merciful and gracious indeed (or no Flesh could abide the Trial) but withal infinitely just and righteous; who is of purer Eyes than even to look upon Iniquity, and therefore who can by no means be supposed to clear the guilty: But who, as he will infallibly recompence the Righteousness of the righteous unto them, so will not less infallibly bring the Wickedness of the wicked upon them.

This the Nature: These the Attributes and Perfections of our great Judge. — Both Justice and Mercy are the Habitation of his Seat. — In him both Love and Terror dwell, which should produce both Love and Fear in

us. — At once Father of Mercies, and consuming Fire. — Away then at once Despair and Presumption. — Son of God and Son of Man; thou sovereign Judge — Righteous by thy divine, and sympathising by thy human Nature. And therefore all Judgment committed unto thee; because thou art the Son of Man: Therefore constituted sovereign Judge as for other Reasons, so expressly for this, that we might have a Judge who could be touched with the Feeling of our Infirmities, and was himself tempted like as we are, though without Sin. A Thought sufficient to awake us as from the dead; to raise, support, and enliven our Spirits, otherwise lost and gone under the overbearing, oppressing Thought of a divine Judgment — But still forget not that the Divinity is not swallowed up of the Humanity; and that therefore the Justice of God and the Honour of the supreme Governor must be satisfied, must have their perfect Work, as well as the Tenderneſs of Man, and the Fellow-feelings of the Brother. — Fear then and tremble.

Consider, in the next Place, the Character of the judged. What are they? A World laden with Iniquity; a Seed of evil Doers;

both originally and personally Sinners; receiving Guilt by Inheritance, and perpetually improving in it. Criminals, Convicts, Debtors insolvent, as well in their own, as in their Father's Name.

If this be a true Picture of Mankind, how is it to fare with them at this general Judgment? As all Flesh have corrupted their Way, is it not to be feared? Is it not to be expected that no Flesh shall be saved? God forbid! We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the Propitiation for our Sins: Having blotted out the Hand-writing that was against us; that was contrary to us, nailing it to his Cross.

We hence may learn what to think of those proud Boasters, who arrogate to themselves the Character of *Perfection*: For being born of God, they cannot sin. Overlooking those other Scriptures, and their own Experience too, all loudly proclaiming, that if we say we have no Sin, we deceive ourselves, and the Truth is not in us: The Truth indeed is not in them; but of a Truth something else, even Pride, Presumption, and Prophaneness. The true Children of God
indeed

indeed sin not so as to be without the Terms of Salvation : Sin not so as to be cast away, but live in such a Manner as to be Heirs of the Redemption which is in Christ Jesus. But no Children of *Adam* (and such the Children of God also are) can live free from Sin : Free from those numberless Sins of Infirmary with which we are continually beset and surrounded : Nay, not free even from those of deeper Dye ; not from grosser and more presumptuous Offences.

To put ourselves upon the Foot of Perfection ; How shocking the Thought ! This indeed is to come with Boldness, not to the Throne of Grace, but to the Bar of Judgment. And to put in not a Suit for a Pardon, but a Plea for Justice. It is to say, that though thou O Lord, shouldst be *extreme* to mark what is done amiss, yet we can abide thee.

Vain also is the Pretence of those, who putting themselves on the Foot of natural Religion, expect Acquittal in the Day of Trial, from their Conformity to the Laws and Duties of Morality, or from their own Works and Deservings of any kind, independently of the christian Mediation. This

too may be in some Sort said to be a Claim of Perfection, as it is an Expectation of Salvation from our own Merits.

Supposing the Observance of the Laws of Nature and Morality to be self-sufficient, and available to Salvation; it must be supposed also that that Observance should be constant, regular, uniform, and without Exception: For if it admits of any single, even the least Transgression or Deviation, from that Moment there is an eternal End to all Claims of Right; from that Moment we are Sinners and Offenders against that Law; and if Sinners and Offenders, then Objects of Wrath and Punishment; and if Objects of Wrath and Punishment, then all future Hope must be in Mercy. And whatever pleasing Hopes our rising Thoughts may build upon these Attributes, we must needs be checked and allayed by Reflection on the no less perfect and essential Attributes of Righteousness and Justice.

Nor will our Weaknesses and Infirmities help us out in the Time of Need: For before they can be pleaded with Effect, it must be inquired into *how* we came by them; what was the original Cause of them. — But
be

be both their *Cause* and their *Number* what it will, yet are we besides guilty of many Offences, committed with our Eyes open, and with an high Hand; Offences, which notwithstanding all our Infirmities (make the most of them) we might, by exerting our native Strength, have avoided. Ask any Man, whether he is not conscious of having in an Infinity of Cases, acted contrary to his Reason and Judgment: What he knew to be wrong, at the Time he was doing it: What he knew he could have avoided, had he made Use of that Power: What he was self-condemned for, *i. e.* what he confessed he had contracted Guilt *by*, and consequently what he deserved Punishment *for*. And if so, then it remains to be considered, how far Mercy and Compassion can dispense with the Demands of Justice and Righteousness.

This must be the melancholy Case of all who put themselves upon the Foot of Nature, and have nothing to trust to, but their own imperfect Obedience.

But Christianity clears up all Doubts, making our Way plain before our Face: It presents us with the all-sufficient Merits of a Redeemer, through whose Blood we have
Forgiveness

Forgiveness of Sins ; through which we have Peace with God, and have received the Atonement. We are washed, we are sanctified in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.—Such are the Riches of his Grace.

This is the Hope of our Calling.—This the Anchor of our Souls.—In a Sense of this, we lift up our Heads, as well convinced that our Redemption, and consequently our Acquittal at the great Judgment, is secure ; or rather, may, if we please, be secure. For how is it secure ? In the Blood of Christ is laid the Possibility, the Foundation ; but we ourselves, with the Grace of God, must complete the Edifice.—The alone *meritorious* Cause is the Sacrifice of Christ : And to suppose any thing else, of what Nature soever, or by whomsoever performed, to add any new Force or Efficacy to it, is to trample under Foot the Son of God, and to undervalue the Blood of the Covenant. But notwithstanding this, there may be something required on our Parts ; some Qualifications, of which if we are not possessed, the Merits of that Sacrifice shall not extend to us. We know there are Faith and Repentance, *i. e.* an Acceptance
of,

of, and firm Reliance upon the Merits of the Sacrifice, and a future Conformity to our Duty. This Conformity to Duty must never, upon any Pretence whatsoever, be overlooked. Neither the Sacrifice itself, nor the Strength of any Faith in its Virtue, will make up for the want of it. Be this Conformity the *Fruit of Faith*, or a *Condition of Salvation*, call it what you will, *the Thing* is absolutely and indispensibly necessary.

The Christian Sacrifice is then the Foundation of our Hopes and Expectations at the great Day of Accounts. And a solid Foundation surely ! Sufficient to raise our sinking Spirits, to stop our bleeding Hearts, to heal the Broken-hearted, and to revive the Spirit of the Contrite. But we should be careful to bear this always in Mind,—that the Purchase is not absolute, but conditional ;—that the inestimable Benefit may be forfeited ;—and that Justice and Mercy being alike the Properties of the great Judge, his Indignation resteth upon Sinners.—This is the only Way to make us easy in this important Affair ; to make us regard *Judgment* as *Redemption* ;—to make us haste unto, and look for that dreaded, wish'd-for Day.

Let

Let us consider, in the third Place, the Nature of the divine Judgment, and the *Articles* upon which it is to proceed.—The most frequent Language of Scripture is, that it shall be according to our *Works*.—The Books shall be opened, and we shall be judged out of those Things which are written in the Books, according to our Works. And so in many other Passages to the same Purpose.—But *Works* are in this Matter to be understood, not in a restrained Sense, as outward Acts only, but in an absolutely general one, as including all and every Part of our Conduct and Behaviour throughout our whole Lives. For we are informed that God shall bring every Work into Judgment, with every *secret* Thing, *i. e.* every Thing relating to us, whether public or private. Of Thoughts and Words there can be no Doubt. For of the former it is said, that they come from within, and defile the Man: And whatever defileth, must certainly be a Subject of Enquiry.—With respect to the latter, the Affirmation is explicit, that by our Words we shall be justified, and by our Words we shall be condemned.

Now

Now Thought, Word, and Work ; take in the *whole* Man.

What is necessary to be observed with respect to Thoughts is this :—When first presented to the Mind, they are, with respect to us, neither good nor evil ; but become so, according to the Reception they meet with there. Their first Entrance is not always in our Power ; and when it is not, neither Praise nor Blame can attend them. What depends upon us, and for which alone we are accountable, is our Manner of entertaining them. Those of a virtuous, pious, and religious Kind, we should gladly admit, kindly embrace, and tenderly cherish ; pursuing their good Motions with our warmest Endeavours, till we bring them to Maturity and Perfection : And if we do otherwise, we shall stand chargeable at the Judgment with the Neglect.—And as all good Thoughts are and should be regarded as the Influences of God's holy Spirit, by neglecting to stir up these Gifts of God which are in us, we may be said to do Despite also to the Spirit of Grace ; which must highly aggravate the Charge.

Thoughts of an evil or sinful Nature must be rejected with Horror ; rejected in their
very

very first Attempts, as we know not the Consequence of a full Admission. They are the Wiles of Satan; the Devices of him, who is thoroughly skilled in all the Deceivableness of Unrighteousness. Expel them instantly and entirely, and all is well: For Virtue and Goodness will be in the Expulsion. This will be Matter for Reward at the great Day of Judgment.—But if, on the contrary, we admit, indulge, ruminate, and feed upon them, woe unto us; for we little know what may be the End thereof. Sin, once conceived and harboured in Thought, may soon break out into all the Horrors of outward Action; and when it does so, we are justly accountable for all that follows, for not preventing the Mischief in due Time, in its first Beginning.—As we have hatched the Cockatrice Egg, we must not be surpris'd, if by and by we shall be destroyed by the Serpent which it produces.

But if no ill Consequence were to follow from Indulgence of evil Thoughts, and we were sure of it too, yet the bare Indulgence itself is Sin: The very Thought of Foolishness is Sin; and a very grievous one too. When Men dislike an Object, they naturally
turn

turn away from it; but continue fixed in their Attention on what they are pleased with and admire. If, therefore, we encourage and entertain evil Thoughts, it is Demonstration we love them. By letting them dwell so long upon the Palate, it is plain, we like their Relish; plain, that we delight in Sin, in the inner Man: And to take Delight in Sin, in any Way, must certainly be an Article of Impeachment at the last Day.

One Thing more with respect to evil Thoughts. Their Entrance, or Occasion of them, though not always in our Power, yet sometimes is. We know what Company, what Diversions; ten thousands of Scenes in Life (many by Experience) we know will lead us into, and be the Occasion of evil Thoughts: And if, nevertheless, we will bring ourselves into, and persist in these Things, we become our own Tempters, and consequently stand chargeable with all that follows.

The Rule of Wisdom then to be observed in this Matter is, to watch our Thoughts with Diligence, as well knowing, that all our Thoughts that come into our Minds, every one of them shall be brought into Judgment;

ment; and that no Thought can be withholden from the Judge.

The next Article.—Our Words take in all trifling, idle, filthy, lewd, slanderous, irreligious, and profane Language. Against all and every of these, many and great are the Denunciations of holy Scripture: And however slightly they may be thought of by those who are accustomed to them, as being but the Breath of their Lips; yet great shall be their Pile: Their own Breath, like a Stream of Brimstone, shall kindle it.

Outward Action is the highest Instance of Sin; is generally committed with the greatest Deliberation; implies the greatest Hardiness and Resolution; is the most in our Power; is the most injurious to ourselves and our Neighbour, and the highest Insult upon the divine Majesty.—In short, outward Acts are the *finishing Strokes* of Sin, and therefore are most *commonly* mentioned in the Affair of Judgment, and put for all the rest, as implying and including them.

As then, our whole Lives, in every Instance, are to be brought into Judgment, the Rule of Wisdom is, to be infinitely careful and circumspect in our Conduct. Watch
the

the minutest Matters; think no Offence *little*: For surely nothing can be little, for which you are to be judged; and more especially when you are told, that he that shall break one of the least of God's Commandments, shall be least in the Kingdom of Heaven, *i. e.* shall not be admitted into it at all.

Another Rule of Wisdom would be, before you to proceed to Action, especially in Matters of which perhaps you have some Doubts or Misgivings, whether or no they are strictly lawful and right, seriously to ask your own Hearts,—how will this Matter appear at the Day of Judgment? At that Day the Secrets of your Hearts will be laid open, the Mask taken off, and *yourselves* be made to see the Vanity of the Disguises with which you now impose upon yourselves. Lay them aside now: Strip the Action of the Cloathing in which you have artfully dressed it up: View it as it is; for that is the Manner it will appear in at the Day of Judgment: And then ask yourselves, if you would like to have it appear *so* in that Day?

As to what other Men, with all their Laws, and Customs, and Manners, determine of

your Actions; that is quite out of the Question: We must determine for ourselves: Every Man has a Court of Conscience within his own Breast; a Court supreme, from which there lies no Appeal. The Judgment of this Court must be his Rule of Action; and the producing of this Judgment, at the last Judgment, will be his Acquittal there. But if he fail in this, no Wonder he is condemned there; for he is self-condemned.

Lastly. Let us reflect upon the *Sentences* which are to follow this great Judgment. What are they? — “Come, ye blessed, inherit the Kingdom; and go, ye cursed, into everlasting Fire.” — These are the two States between which the whole Race of Mankind are finally to be divided; and every one may chuse for himself. Life and Death eternal are here set before us, and we may stretch our Hand unto which we will. It is needless to enlarge on these two States: The very Sound of them is sufficient. — Happiness and Misery everlasting are capable of no Improvement or Inforcement; and if these fail to influence us, all Nature cries aloud it is not in me to do it. If the everlasting Enjoyment

ment of God, the supreme Good, be not sufficient to invite, nor everlasting Burnings to terrify, we must be let alone for ever.

When then is this great and dreadful Judgment to come? The Text tells us, after our Death.—It is appointed unto Man once to die, and after that the Judgment. The general and most solemn Judgment is not indeed to take place till the Heavens be no more, till the Consummation of all Things: Yet, as every Man undergoes a particular Judgment immediately upon his Death, by which his Fate is fixed, and consequently the general Judgment governed; since this is the Case, the Day of every Man's Death is to him the Day of Judgment: And therefore strictly true and proper is it to say, that after Death is Judgment.

When then is Death to come? That is a Question which none of the living can answer. Life is originally the free Gift of God, and the Issues of Life and Death remain still in his Hands. How precarious the Tenure is, the common Course of Things abundantly demonstrates. Did we see that it held out for Ages, that the Years of Man were counted by Millions; yet, as Millions are nothing

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with respect to Eternity, even those Millions would be well employed in preparing for a Judgment which is connected with Eternity, with an Eternity of Happiness or Misery. But we know that we are Creatures but of a few Days, Days that are swifter than a Post, and that we have here no continuing City. When the withering Grass, the fading Flower, the declining Shadow, the flashing Vapour, are all of them the acknowledged Emblems of our present State : When we see continually the Infant of Days and the hoary Head mingle together in the Dust : When Objects of all Ages are perpetually in View, how improves the Argument for speedy and earnest Preparation for that Judgment which is to follow ?

But one Step further still. — Add, lastly, to the certain Shortness of Life, the Uncertainty even of that short Space itself, and then the Argument for speedy and earnest Preparation will be incapable of any further heightening.

In the midst of Life we are in Death ; so surrounded and beset with Dangers ; so perpetually exposed to it, that the Wonder is,
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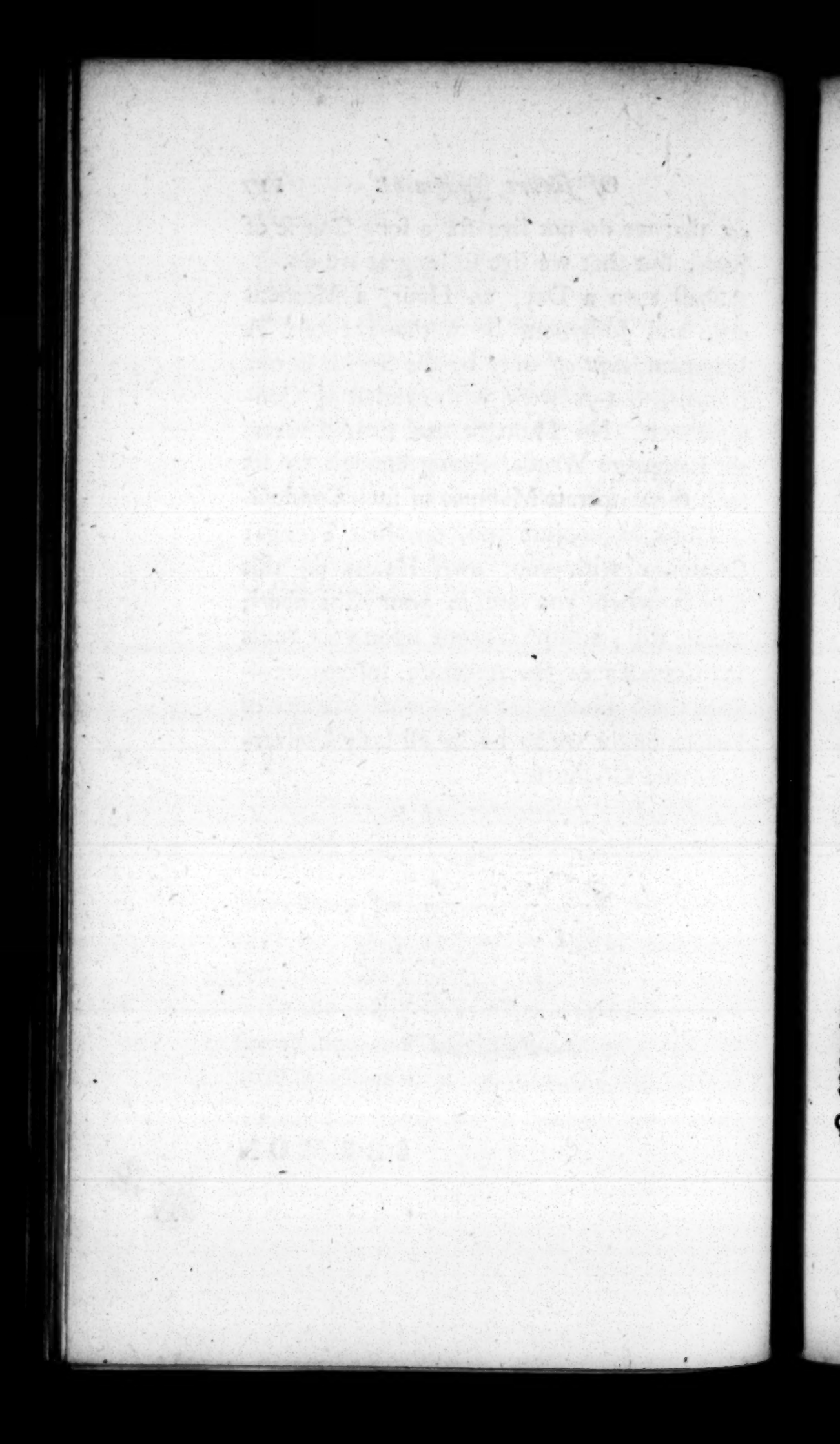
not that we do not live for a long Course of Years, but that we live so long as we do.

Shall then a Day, an Hour, a Moment pass, and Judgment be unthought of? A Judgment, *kept off* only by the Breath in our Nostrils, but *followed* with everlasting Consequences: No Thought can furnish Ideas, nor Language Words, strong enough to set forth the desperate Madness of such Conduct.

Think, I conjure you, on these Things: Commune with your own Hearts on this Subject when you are in your Chambers, and are still; and press home upon your Souls and Consciences the Apostle's Inference:— Since these Things are so,—what Manner of Persons ought we to be in all holy Conversation and Godliness?



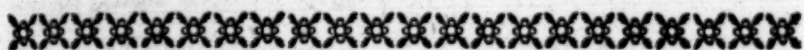
S E R M O N





S E R M O N VI.

Of the Bridegroom's Coming.



St. MATTH. XXV. 5, 6.

*While the Bridegroom tarried,
they all slumbered and slept.
And at Midnight there was a
Cry made, Behold, the Bride-
groom cometh, go ye out to meet
him.*

 HE Happiness which the faithful
Servants of God are hereafter to be
rewarded with, is in Scripture fre-
quently represented to us under the Simili-

tude of a Marriage-feast. Thus says our Saviour, in the 22d Chapter of this Gospel, "the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a certain King, which made a Marriage for his Son." And in the *Revelations* it is said, that "the Marriage of the Lamb is come;"—and "blessed are they which are called to the Marriage-supper of the Lamb."

In the Parable of which the Text is a Part, the same Thought is made Use of. The whole Parable is an Allusion to the Marriage-ceremonies among the *Jews*, which it is not at present necessary to relate. The Moral, the Application, is our Business; and that is very obvious. The Design in general is to represent the Method in which the Almighty will deal with us in the last great Day of Account. The Difference of Men with regard to their religious Conduct is expressed by the Virgins; Part of whom were wise, and Part foolish:—The Care and Caution of the righteous, by the wise Virgins providing a sufficient Quantity of Oil to replenish their Lamps; in case the Bridegroom should tarry longer than was expected: And the stupid Carelessness of the wicked, in their foreseeing no Accident, and not looking beyond

yond the present, by the foolish Virgins taking Lamps, without any Reserve of Oil to supply them. — Their all slumbering and sleeping during the Bridegroom's Delay, signifies, in a very lively Manner, the too great Security and Supineness of all, even the best of Men: — And the Bridegroom's coming at Midnight, the Suddenness of our Lord's coming to Judgment. — The Reward of the righteous is to go in to the Marriage: The Punishment of the wicked is Exclusion from it. — And the Vanity of a late Repentance, the Insufficiency of all After-thought, is signified by the Door's being shut before the foolish Virgins could return with their new-bought Oil; and by the Bridegroom's final Answer to them from within, "Verily! I know you not."

This Parable then is full of the most excellent Instruction: It is replete with Variety of the most useful Lessons; so many and so important, that no one Discourse can do them Justice. It is therefore my Design to single out two Circumstances of this Parable for your present Consideration; and these are contained in that Part of it which I have prefixed to this Discourse: — "While
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“ the Bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered “ and slept;” all of them, even the wise Virgins; even they who had Precaution enough to carry with them a Supply of Oil, in case of Need; even these were off their Guard: “ They all slumbered and slept.”— And out of this supine and unthinking Condition, they were awaked with the sudden Alarm of the Bridegroom's coming. When deep Sleep had fallen upon them; then, even at Midnight, was the Cry made, “ Behold, “ the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet “ him.”

The Unguardedness of Man, and the Unexpectedness of his Master's coming, are Subjects that deserve to be well weighed and considered: They are surely sufficient to engage our most serious Meditation.

All then, even the best of Men, are too apt to be off their Guard: They are all careless, negligent, and remiss. When they apprehend no Danger near, they abate of their Watchfulness. Security is of all others the most hazardous Condition. The utmost of an Enemy's Wish is, that those he has Designs upon may either not foresee his Designs, or despise them; *i. e.* that they may be

be secure. This, in a good Measure, ensures the Victory. Thus the Conquest of the City of *Laiſh* by the Children of *Dan* is wholly attributed to the Security of its Inhabitants; for it is more than once observed, that the People were careless, quiet, and secure.

In such a State of Security, with regard to Religion, do most Men live: The best are not without their Share of it. So long does our Lord delay his coming, that all, wearied out as it were with watching, are too apt to slumber and sleep. A steady and uniform Conduct through the whole Course of our Lives, requires no little Pains, Diligence, and Attention; more indeed than most Men are disposed to bestow. Besides, as to Religion, the Cares of this World, and the Deceitfulness of Riches, are ever calling off our Attention from it. The Business and the Pleasures of Life will neither of them suffer Religion to engross us. These are powerful Avocations; so powerful, that they do not only disturb and interrupt our Religion, but for a Time make us absolutely forget it. Even the good Man; even he who (as far as there is any Propriety in that Word) is truly
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stiled religious; he (I say) is often negligent and remiss. His Loins are not always girt; and his Lamp (though always burning) is yet not always trimmed. However vigilant he may be in the Main, yet now and then he forgets himself: He suffers himself either to be called off from his Watch, or to slumber and sleep upon it: He sees every thing go quietly on, as nothing remarkable happens to alarm him: All seems still about him: Nothing either from without, or from within, disturbs him. Of all this Quietness and Tranquillity, Carelessness is the natural Consequence. To be on our Guard when Danger is apprehended to be near at hand, is what Self-love, the strongest Principle in human Nature, prompts us to. This, Self-defence puts us upon. But Negligence in a fancied Security is as natural, as Vigilance, in Time of Danger.

We need no more to convince us of this drowsy Condition, in which we, as it were, *lose* our Days, than the Surprise we all, even the best of us, appear in, upon something remarkable happening to us. A Fit of Sickness, or any extraordinary Accident, frightens and alarms us. We seem, as it were, roused
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and awakened out of our Lethargy : We return to our Station with that Hurry and Confusion which are natural to Men who are caught off their Duty. We then resume our Watch, with full Purpose of a more strict Attendance for the future. Happy that we have escaped this Danger, which our shameful Negligence exposed us to, we determine heartily to run such Hazards no more. But how long do these Resolutions hold ? How long do we continue to keep so severe and strict a Watch ? While our Fright continues ; till the Enemy is out of Sight. A false Security being then restored, we begin again to slumber and sleep.

If then such is the Infirmary of human Nature, that all, even the best Men, are too apt to be off their Guard, to be negligent and remiss in their Duty ; we may from hence learn the exceeding great Propriety of that Petition in our Liturgy, to be delivered from sudden Death. It has been objected to this, that sudden Death, to a Person fitted and prepared for Death, is of all Things in Nature the greatest Blessing ; and that therefore such Persons, instead of praying against it, ought to pray for it : And it being supposed

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posed that some in every Congregation are so fitted, it is not proper to make that a public Petition, which all the Congregation cannot join in. To this it were enough to answer, that public Liturgies being formed for public Use, they must be so contrived as to suit the Circumstances and Condition, not of a few Particulars, but of the Bulk and Generality of Mankind; and that therefore in them nothing ought to be deprecated as an Evil, or prayed for as a Good, but what is so, if not universally to all Men without Exception, yet at least to the Majority of Mankind. Now, I believe there is no one who can possibly entertain so charitable an Opinion of the Bulk of Mankind, as to believe that sudden Death is not an Evil to them: On the contrary, every one who has the least Reflection must be sensible, that such are the Lives of most Men, that sudden Death is one of the greatest possible Evils that can befall them. To be delivered from sudden Death is therefore a Petition exceedingly proper for the Generality of Men, and therefore very rightly inserted in a public Form of Worship.

But this is not all. We have seen that all Men, without Exception, are apt to slumber
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and sleep ; even the best Men are negligent and faulty ; we all want to be rouzed : And if this be the Case then, to be delivered from sudden Death is a Prayer proper, not only for the Generality of Men, but likewise for every Individual. We confess indeed, that a good Life is the best Preparation for Death : It is certainly the only Preparation that can be depended on. But notwithstanding this, as the best offend in many Things ; as there is no Man, however circumspect, that liveth, and sinneth not ; it must surely be a very useful and desirable Thing, even to them, to have a little Time to set themselves in Order, perfectly to recover themselves from their Drowsiness and Sleepiness, and completely to prepare themselves, as a Bride adorned for her Husband.— We read in the Parable, that *all* the Virgins arose and trimmed their Lamps. This, it seems, was becoming even the wise Virgins. Their Lamps indeed went not out, and therefore they would have gone in with the Bridegroom, though they had not had Leisure for that Ceremony. And so no doubt of it, but the Salvation of the habitual good Liver is secure, however sudden and unexpected his Death may be. But this
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proves not, but that the other is more expedient and more desirable.

But however strict and regular our Lives may be ; however conscientious and circumspect we may be in the Discharge of our Duty ; yet we should always be careful not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think, but to think soberly : We should remember that Pride was not made for Man ; and that of all kinds of Pride, spiritual or religious Pride is the most unbecoming him. The best Christians are always the most humble. True Religion and Humility are indeed inseparable. Whatever therefore our Lives may be, and however secure our Salvation, be our Death ever so sudden, yet no Man should have so good an Opinion of himself as to *desire it* : On the contrary, it should seem impossible for any Man who looks into his own Heart, and is in any Degree sensible of his numberless Negligences and Failings, not to pray to be delivered from sudden Death, with almost as much Earnestness as the most abandoned.

It is indeed not easy to conceive how it should enter into the Heart of such a Creature as Man to wish for or desire sudden Death.

Death. Could he perform an unfinning Obedience, there would be some Propriety in his Wish ; but, surrounded as he is with Negligences and Ignorances, with Failings and Infirmities of all Sorts, what has a better Title to be his Dread ? Or at least, though a good Man need not dread it, none should think himself good enough to wish it.

The Possibility of sudden and unexpected Death should indeed teach us a very useful Lesson. It should teach us to be always upon our Guard ; to keep a perpetual and a diligent Watch ; to be infinitely fearful of being surpris'd ; to be constantly in such a Readiness at least, as that, whenever the Cry is made that the Bridegroom cometh, to have nothing more to do than to arise and trim our Lamps, and go out to meet him.

But why, may it be said, are we kept in such a State of Suspence and Uncertainty, with regard to an Affair of such infinite Importance ? Would it not be kind and compassionate in our heavenly Father to make us certain of that Day and Hour, in which we were to appear at his dread Tribunal ? For surely then we should take Care to be prepared for it. Were we but apprized of

the exact Time of our Judgment, it would be impossible not to be provided for it : For, as our Saviour himself reasons, if the good Man of the House had known at what Hour (at what particular Hour) the Thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his House to be broken through.—But so far from this, we are designedly and on purpose kept in Ignorance of it. Our Lord tells us, that he will come in such an Hour as we think not of ; in the Time we least think of or expect him ;—that he will come as a *Snare* upon all them that dwell upon the Face of the Earth ; — that he will come as a Thief in the Night : — And in the Text he tells us, that it was at Midnight ; at Midnight, when deep Sleep is fallen upon Men ; when they are all in a State of the profoundest Sleep and Security ; that the Cry was made, “ Behold, the Bridegroom cometh.” Do not these Passages look as if it were designed we should be surprised ? Would not one from hence imagine, that instead of escaping, it was intended we should be ensnared ? — No ! by no means. However sagely we may reason in our own Opinion, yet God is wiser than Man : He knoweth

knoweth all Things ; he knows what is best for us, and always acts agreeably to that Knowledge, whatever we may imagine.

He keeps us in absolute Uncertainty as to the particular Time of our Death. We may perhaps look upon this at first Sight as ensnaring us : But that it cannot be ; for then we should have no Notice given us, that his Coming was to be so sudden. Such Suddenness without Warning would indeed have that Appearance. But all Warnings are, in the Nature of them, intended to prevent Surprise, and take off all Imputation of Design, be the Danger warned against ever so sudden. The Suddenness and the Warning together have the strongest Tendency, not to throw us off our Guard, but to keep us constant upon it : And if we will have Patience to consider the Matter a little more closely, we shall perceive, that this Conduct of the Deity is founded on the best and wisest Reason : For if all Men were absolutely certain of the particular Time of their Death, this Certainty would be often an invincible Obstruction to Improvement : — It would be always destructive of the Joys and Comforts of Life : — It

would be absolutely inconsistent with all the Ends and Purposes of Religion.

First. The Knowledge of the particular Time of our Death would be often an invincible Obstruction to Improvement: For Length of Days and long Life are not allotted to every one; and every one to whom they are not allotted (did they know it) would give themselves up to Indolence and Inactivity: For to what Purpose would they unanswerably argue, Should we weary out ourselves in contriving and effecting a Variety of Schemes and Projects, which we know we shall not live to enjoy? Rather would they say, Let us eat and drink, since Tomorrow we die. Since our Days are to be cut off in the Midst, let us make the most of them; at least, let us enjoy Quietness and Ease for the little Time that is assigned us. Labour and Travel be to those who know they shall see and taste the Fruits of them: As for us short-liv'd Creatures, why should we labour in vain? Should we not be more foolish even than the Beasts that perish, if we should begin that, which, when we set out, we know we shall not live to finish; or if perhaps to finish, yet not to enjoy?

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It is the Hopes of living, to rejoice in the Works of our Hands, that is the Encouragement to Industry. Though all Men do not live to a good old Age, yet all Men hope to do it; and in that Hope they form and set about their great Designs. Were they then not animated by this Hope; were they, on the contrary, sure and certain of their speedy Decease; how lifeless and inactive would they be? If not stirred by this gentle Passion, their Blood would stagnate. However religiously their few Days may be supposed to be spent, yet they would certainly be of no Use or Advantage to the rest of Mankind, for whose Sake, as well as for their own, they were sent into the World. The World has oftentimes received the highest Benefit and Advantage from the Attempts of great Geniuses, who have been cut off in the Bloom off their Days; which Attempts, had they themselves been certain of the short Continuance of their Days, it is not to be conceived they should have had Spirit and Resolution enough to have pursued.

But secondly: The Knowledge of the particular Time of our Death would be destructive of the Joys and Comforts of Life.

As we are at present ignorant of this Matter, the shortest and the longest Livers are all equally happy in the Hopes of Life. However they may be in the End disappointed, yet at present they all equally please themselves with the Prospect of it. In this respect then we are all upon the same Foot; For he who has the shortest Period of Time assigned him, enjoys that Period with as true a Relish, has as much real Happiness for that Time, as he whose Days are drawn out to the greatest Length. But, upon the other Supposition, this could not be: For were the Day of every Man's Death known, they to whom but few Days were allotted, would not be able to enjoy even those few: On the contrary, they would be ever bemoaning their hard Fate; they would look with an envious Eye upon those to whom longer Life was permitted; they would be ever murmuring and repining at what they would call the unequal Dispensation of Providence.—And as to those whose Portion is Length of Days and long Life; those who know their appointed Time is at the greatest Distance; yet even these would by no means enjoy Life in the same Degree then, that they do now in
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their present State of Uncertainty : For, be their Day ever so distant, yet they can see it at that Distance ; and thither would their Eyes be always directed. They would be so intent upon that gloomy Period, that all the Pleasures of the Interval would prove tasteless and insipid. This would give such a melancholy Cast to the Mind, that even the longest Liver would be said, not so much to live or enjoy Life, as to linger out a tedious Number of Days. In a Word, were the particular Time of every Man's Death known to him, we should all pass our Time like so many condemned Criminals, ever counting up the Days and Hours to our Execution.

But, thirdly and lastly : The Knowledge of the particular Time of our Death would be destructive of all the Ends and Purposes of Religion. The great End and Design of all Religion, is to make us live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present World. A *Life* of Virtue is what it proposes. Now it is evident, that this End is best answered by whatever tends most effectually to keep us in a State of Care and Vigilance : And nothing can be supposed to do this, if our present Uncertainty of Life cannot. It is the

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Method we ourselves take, when we have a mind to awe any Person into a good and regular Conduct, to keep him unacquainted with the Times of our Inquiry; to keep him always in Fear of being surpris'd. There is no Man so hardy and abandoned, as not to have his Affairs in some tolerable Order against the Time he knows they are to be looked into. But this is not enough: For this he may do, and be at all other Times absolutely negligent and remiss. And just so would it fare with Religion, were the Time of our particular Judgment known to us. There is no Doubt but we should take Care to endeavour to put ourselves in some sort of Readiness, as that dread Period began to approach. But then it is as certain, that we should never trouble our Heads about Religion till that Time: For why, to what Purpose, should we so early set about the irksome Business of Religion? Length of Days is in our Right Hand: Time enough therefore to think of that, when they begin to draw towards a Conclusion: Time enough to prepare for Death, when it comes a little nearer in View: Time enough to wean ourselves from the Goods of this World, when

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we are about to leave them. As we know our appointed Time, there is no Danger of being surpris'd: We may therefore, for many Years yet to come, without running any Hazard, go on to take our Fill of whatsoever our Souls lust after. As we know the precise and distant Hour when the Thief will come, we need not think of watching so long before. No! that is idle: We know our Security, and therefore let us enjoy it: Thus, without all Controversy, would Men reason, and thus would they act, did they know the particular Time of their Death. This therefore is, both in Wisdom and Goodness, concealed from them. Did they know it, the Argument for Vigilance would be quite lost; whereas, in our present State of Uncertainty, it is incapable of Addition. For what more can be urged to make us be ever preparing for, and providing against Death, than the Uncertainty how soon it may overtake us? What more, to evince the Madness of all Remissness in our Duty, than the continual Danger of being surpris'd? Now, the good Man of the House knows not the exact Moment he shall be attacked, and therefore, like all wise and prudent Men, is
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ever on the defensive; continually on the Watch: He will not abate of his Vigilance one Moment, lest in that one Moment he should be ruined. To conclude: Let us then, sensible of the Uncertainty and Precariousness of Life, be always careful to have our Loins girt, and our Lamps burning; and let us continue thus, as faithful Servants, waiting for the Coming of our Lord; that, when he cometh, whensoever he cometh, whether at Midnight, at the Cock-crowing, or in the Morning, whether early or late in Life, we may open unto him immediately: For blessed, infinitely blessed, are those Servants, whom their Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching.



S E R M O N



S E R M O N VII.

Of the last Judgment.



2 COR. V. 10.

For we must all appear before the Judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the Things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.



IT is none of the least of the Advantages of the Christian Revelation, that it hath brought Life and Immortality to Light; that it hath given
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us absolute Certainty of a future Judgment, and of a State of Rewards and Punishments consequent upon it. It is (I say) no little Advantage to be well settled in this Point, since the Belief or Disbelief of this Article cannot fail of having the most powerful Influence upon our Lives and Conversations. With regard to this important Article, the greatest Part of the Heathen World may be said to have lain in Darkness. Natural Reason indeed does suggest many Arguments for the Truth of a future State: Such are our earnest Hope and Expectation of Immortality; the Forebodings of Conscience, and the unequal Dispensations of Providence with regard to Virtue and Vice. But whatever Force there is in these Arguments, the Bulk of Mankind are plainly incapable of discerning it: It is not for them to see through a long Series of Arguments, and to pursue them through all their Consequences. This is a Work for which they have neither Leisure nor Capacity. These Reasonings were therefore of no Use to the illiterate; nor, in Truth, were they of much more to the learned. One * of the most learned En-

* Cicero,

quirers of the Heathen World, and who had particularly employed himself upon this Subject, was, after all his Search, wavering and unsatisfied, and rather wished for, than believed a future State. Some Sects of Philosophers * indeed there were, who pleaded for Immortality; but others †, not less numerous, flatly denied it.

I would not be thought, by what I have said, to have any Design to weaken the Arguments for a future State, which may be drawn from Reason only: By no Means; these Arguments have (no Doubt of it) great Weight in them, and appear to us at this Day (now that they are back'd by Revelation) sufficiently strong and conclusive.

Now that we have full Conviction of the Certainty of a Life to come, from Revelation, we can the more easily discern the Force of those Arguments for it, which may be drawn from Reason. But whether these Arguments alone would have been sufficient for our Conviction, we may well doubt, when we reflect upon the little Success they met with when left to themselves, in the Heathen World. The present almost universal Belief

* Platonists.

† Epicureans.

of a future State is therefore to be ascribed to Revelation; not to any superior Sagacity in the present Age, nor to any Improvement of human Reason. Whatever Arguments for a future State our Reason at present suggests, the very same, we find, by the Writings of the antient Sages, were the Dictates of theirs. We know of no new nor better Arguments than they did; nor do we reason from those Arguments in a new and different Manner. To some other Cause than bare human Reason, the present Certainty of a State after Death must be ascribed; and that is, to Revelation. The Revelation of Jesus Christ has given us full Assurance of the Truth of this important Article, in the clearest and most express Terms; in Terms equally intelligible by the learned and the unlearned. It is not now to be deduced from a long Train of Arguments, nor to be made out from some obscure Hints in the Law of *Moses*. The Knowledge of this Truth does not now require any great Faculty of Reasoning, nor any Acquaintance with the Mysteries of the Law. No: This Truth is now written in the fairest and largest Characters: He that runs may read it, in every

every Page of the Oracles of God. The full Discovery of this important Truth was reserved for the Sun of Righteousness, who was to bring Life and Immortality to Light. It is to Christianity then that we are obliged for our present Certainty of a future State; it is its Lustre which has enlightened and improved our Reason. They therefore who at present insist upon the absolute Sufficiency of unassisted Reason for the Discovery of this Truth, are the most unfair and ungrateful Adversaries: Unfair, in ascribing to Reason what is due to Revelation; and ungrateful, in endeavouring to overthrow Revelation, by means of that very Light which it affords them.

A future State, and a Judgment to come (I said) were to be met with in every Page of the Oracles of God. True! And amongst the many clear and positive Declarations and Assertions of this Truth, there is none more clear and express, more strong and conclusive, than the Words which I have chosen for the Subject of our present Meditations.

A Judgment to come is a Subject too copious to be fully handled within the Com-
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pass of one Discourse: It is therefore my Design at present only

To make some useful Reflections upon this Description of the last Judgment, and then

To draw an Inference or two from those Reflections.

The first Thing that offers itself to our Consideration in this Description of the last Judgment, is the Universality of the Judgment. "We must *all* appear before the "Judgment-seat of Christ." The whole Race of *Adam* is assembled before him; high and low, rich and poor, one with another: For God is as well the Judge, as the Maker of us all. God is no Respector of Persons: He regardeth not the rich, more than the poor, seeing they all are the Work of his Hands, and are therefore promiscuously to be summoned to his dread Tribunal. The Sea shall give up the dead which are in it; and Death and Hell, the dead which are in them; and they shall all appear before the Judgment-seat of Christ. This Trial no Power can escape, no Artifice evade, nor Riches buy off. Since all, without Exception, have sinned; all, without Exception, must be judged.

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In the next place, the Text informs us upon what Articles we shall be tried ; “ the Things done in his Body.” But by the Things done in the Body we are to understand, not only our outward Actions, but our Thoughts and Words also : For from other Places of Scripture it appears, that by these also, as well as by our outward Actions, we shall be judged. Thus in one Place we are told, that evil Thoughts come from within, and defile the Man. Evil Thoughts are then justly punishable. Upon this Article therefore we shall be judged. And in another Place our Saviour tells us, that every idle Word which we shall speak, we shall give Account thereof in the Day of Judgment ; for by our Words we shall be justified, and by our Words we shall be condemned. Not only then our outward Actions, but our Thoughts and Words also, shall be brought into Judgment ; “ for God “ shall bring every Thought, and Word, and “ Deed, into Judgment ; with every secret “ Thing, whether it be good, or whether it “ be evil.” Our whole Lives shall be laid open, and every Circumstance of them examined with the nicest Particularity. Not

only the outward Actions themselves shall be inquired after, but the secret Springs and Causes of them shall be searched into. It will not be sufficient for us that we can produce many Alms and Prayers; that we can alledge our Attendance on Sermons, on Sacraments, and on every Office of Religion. We shall be further examined, to what Principle so much apparent Goodness was owing. It will be inquired, whether our Alms proceeded from Compassion, or from Vanity? whether they were done to please God, or to be seen of Men? whether our Attendance on the Sanctuary proceeded from the Delight we took in approaching to God, or from a Design of imposing upon Mankind, by giving them an Opinion of our Piety: And we shall be asked, whether we were such constant Hearers of the Preachers of Righteousness, because we were sincerely disposed to be instructed and informed? or whether our chief Design was not, to satisfy an idle Curiosity. Nor shall we be less examined, upon what Principle we were just, sober, temperate, &c. whether it was a Regard to our Reputation, or present Prosperity, that produced these Virtues in us; or a Sense of Duty, and

a Love of Virtue? These materially good Deeds shall indeed be laid up as Memorials before God; but they shall be Memorials either of our Righteousness or of our Wick- edness, according to the different Causes which gave Birth to them. God seeth not as Man seeth; for Man can go no farther than the outward Appearance, but God look- eth upon the Heart; and as he finds that sound, or tainted, pronounces Judgment on the Man.

We shall be examined further, what Im- provement we have made of the Talents committed to our Care; what Use of the superior Advantages with which perhaps we have been blessed. The rich will be called to give an Account of their Stewardship: They will be examined, whether they have been honest in their Trust: Whether they have provided for the Servants of God their Portion of Meat in due Season: Whether or no they have applied to their own Use what God entrusted them with, for the Benefit of the hungry, the naked, and the distressed? In short, before the true Riches are com- mitted to their Trust, they shall be nicely

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examined, whether they have been faithful in the unrighteous Mammon.

Of the great and powerful, it will be inquired, whether they have employed their Power in oppressing or in relieving the weak and helpless; whether in protecting the innocent, or in rescuing the guilty; in suppressing Vice, or in promoting Virtue.

The Men of Learning, Parts, and Abilities, will be examined, how they have employed these great and shining Advantages; whether they have used them to the Maintenance of Religion and Virtue, or to the Encouragement of Wickedness and Vice; whether they have been exercised in instructing, or in perverting the ignorant and unwary; whether in colouring over Vice, to conceal its native Deformity; or in representing Religion in its true and beautiful Colours: In a Word, whether in spreading through the World true Knowledge and Religion, or in propagating Wickedness and Error?

What Use has been made of these superior Advantages (I say) will be particularly examined; for to whom much is given, of them shall much be required. But yet let
not

not those who have no Account to give of these nobler Talents, think for that Reason, that they have nothing to answer for. They have not indeed so much, but still they have enough to account for. The lowest Condition in Life has its Temptations; has its Virtues; has its Duties. The poor and ignoble will be examined, whether they be contented, humble, and resigned, under their Poverty and Contempt; and some Improvement will be expected, even of the lowest Capacity.

In short, high and low, rich and poor, must all be judged according to their several Abilities and Capacities, according to the Number and Excellence of the Talents committed to their Charge. It will not be regarded what Part we have acted in Life, but (be it what it will) whether we have acted it well, or not. The Parts are not of our own chusing; they are allotted us by God: Let us see that they be well performed: For all Virtue lies, not in the Nature of the Character, but in the Justness of the Performance. Move we therefore in a higher or in a lower Sphere, “ we shall all appear before the
“ Judgment-seat of Christ; that every one
“ may receive the Things done in his Body,

“ according to that he hath done, whether
“ it be good or bad.”

I come now, in the next place, to draw
an Inference or two from what has been said.
And,

First. From what has been said of the
Universality of this Judgment, we may per-
ceive the infinite Folly of not providing for
what we see cannot be escaped. It is a
common Rule of Prudence, to prepare for
what is not to be avoided, especially if it be
a Matter of any Consequence. By this Rule
we govern ourselves in our ordinary Affairs,
and yet overlook it in this single Instance, in
which it is of the highest, the utmost Conse-
quence, to observe it. There is no Man
that liveth, who shall not see Death : And
as it is appointed unto all Men once to die,
so after that is the Judgment. We are as
sure therefore that we shall be judged, we
are as sure that we shall die, as that we now
live. What astonishing Folly is it then to
live unmindful of this dreadful and inevitable
Judgment? Were there the least Possibility
of escaping it, there might be some little
Pretence, some Cloak, for our neglecting it.
But when it is confessedly both indisputably
certain,

certain, and infinitely terrible; to run thus with our Eyes open, upon our Ruin, is Desperateness beyond Example.

But secondly. From what has been said of the Particularity and Exactness of this Judgment to come, we may infer, the absolute Necessity of keeping the strictest Watch over all our Thoughts, Words, and Works: For there is not so much as a Thought in our Hearts, not a Word in our Tongues, not the most inconsiderable of our Actions, but what are registered and recorded faithfully. Did we seriously reflect upon this, it would be impossible for our Behaviour to be so light and giddy, so careless and unguarded, as it too often is. We should watch over our Conduct with the nicest Care, lest at any Time our Foot should slip: We should keep our Hearts with all Diligence: We should set a Watch before the Door of our Lips, that we offend not with our Tongues: And we should look well to our Ways, that we transgress not the least of God's Commandments. Did we reflect upon this, it would be impossible to give ourselves such an unbounded Liberty; particularly it would be impossible to give our Tongues such an un-

bounded Freedom, did we remember, that every idle Word, every Oath, every profane and wanton Jest, every false, every malicious, every censorious Word, should be written in indelible Characters, and at the last Day rise up in Judgment against us, and condemn us.

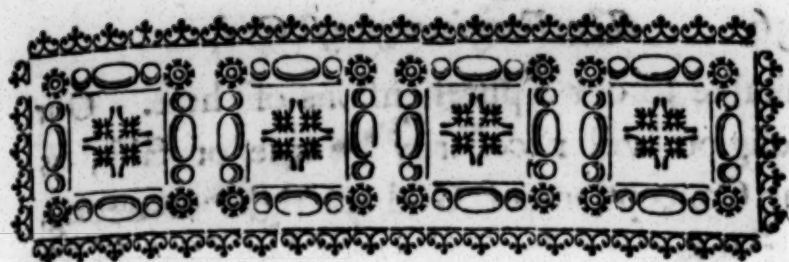
Lastly. From what has been said, let us draw the Apostle's Inference: "What Manner of Men ought we to be, in all holy Conversation and Godliness?" What Influence should this sure and certain Expectation of a Judgment to come, have upon our whole Lives and Conversations? How should it administer Consolation to the righteous, and strike Horror into the wicked?

How should it animate the righteous? how should it support them under all the present Discouragements of Virtue? To reflect that all their good Deeds are faithfully recorded, in order to be proclaimed before the whole assembled Creation; and to entitle them to the gracious Sentence, which their Saviour shall then pronounce: "Come, ye blessed of my Father; receive the Kingdom prepared for you from the Beginning of the World."

And

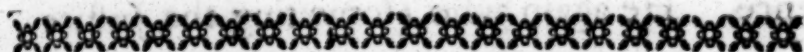
And how infinitely dreadful should be the Condition of the sinful, how tasteless all the Pleasures of Sin, when they reflect that all and every of their Offences (like the Hairs of their Heads) are numbered, and exactly registered, with Design hereafter fully to be laid open before Men and Angels, to manifest the Justice of that insupportable Sentence, which their Judge shall then pronounce; "Go, ye cursed, into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels."





S E R M O N VIII.

*The Forgiveness of God, an
Argument for fearing him.*



P S A L M CXXX. 4.

*But there is Forgiveness with Thee,
that Thou mayest be feared.*

 HERE is nothing of greater Con-
sequence to our religious Concerns,
than to have right Apprehensions
of the divine Nature and Attributes: For as
all Religion is founded on, and deduced from
the Nature and Attributes of the Deity, our
Notion of that must consequently be always
suitable

suitable to our Apprehensions of these. Our Religion will necessarily be true or false, as our Conceptions of God are right or wrong. For Instance; he who considers God as an unmerciful and implacable Being, as a Being of such rigid Justice, as absolutely to forget Mercy, must necessarily be forced into Despair; must necessarily cast off all Religion; since he must think it in vain to endeavour to serve that God, whom he is sensible he cannot help offending, and whom he conceives to be too just, to forgive the least Offence. He again who (forgetting the Justice of the Deity) considers him only as gracious and merciful, long-suffering, and of great Pity, is apt from hence to solace himself in Sin; to flatter himself with Hopes of Impunity, be his Offences ever so many, or so great. Such an one is tempted to throw off all Regard to the Commands of that Being, which he apprehends to be too good to be provoked, and too merciful to punish. While he who entertains true and right Notions, both of the Justice and Mercy of the Almighty, *i. e.* he who believes his Justice to be tempered with Mercy, and his Mercy corrected with Justice, is thoroughly furnished

nished for every good Work ; the Consideration of the divine Justice will not suffer such a one to presume, nor that of his Mercy to despair : He knows both the Terrors of the Lord, and the exceeding Riches of his Grace. The one will prevent his continuing in Sin ; the other will give him Peace and Consolation, on his forsaking it ; and both will conspire to lead him to Repentance.

Of all the divine Attributes, there is perhaps none we are so apt to misunderstand and misapply, as those of Mercy and Forgiveness. They are the Attributes in which we look upon ourselves as chiefly interested, and therefore on them, too often, solely dwell : And these we are sure to magnify, however, by that Means, we may derogate from the rest. We flatter ourselves, that the Father of Mercies will be so far from being extreme to mark what is done amiss, that on the contrary, he will entirely blot out as a thick Cloud our Transgressions, and as a Cloud our Sins ; that he whose Compassions fail not, cannot treasure up Wrath ; that, as he knows whereof we are made, and remembers that we are but Dust ; *i. e.* as he knows and pities the Weaknesses and Infirmities

firmities of human Nature ; his Mercy need not be infinite, to pardon the Offences of Beings of so weak and imperfect a Nature. But we are told, that his Mercy reacheth unto the Heavens, *i. e.* that it is infinite : And if so, we flatter ourselves, that it will easily cover a Multitude of Sins ; that it will be more than sufficient to pardon all the Crimes we can possibly be guilty of, in this short and momentary Life. Thus do we speak Peace to ourselves, when in Truth there is no Peace : Thus miserably do we deceive ourselves, by imagining it shall be well with us at the latter End, though at present we walk after the Sight of our Eyes : Thus do we fancy, we reconcile the Hopes of Happiness hereafter, with the Indulgence of our Appetites here : Thus do we turn the Grace of God into Lasciviousness, by making his Mercy and Forgiveness, which are truly Encouragements to Virtue, Arguments for Vice.

We are told in the Text, that there is Forgiveness with God, that he may be feared ; that is, that the Mercy and Forgiveness of the Almighty should produce in us a religious Fear and Dread of him ; a Fear to offend

send him. At first Sight it may be natural to imagine, that the divine Power or Justice, or indeed any other Attribute, should be likelier to produce Fear than that of Forgiveness; which carrying nothing but Love and Goodness in the Idea of it, can never be supposed to excite that Passion. But, upon a nearer View of it, it will be found to be no less productive of religious Fear, than those Attributes which seem to carry with them the greatest Terror.

To lay before you the true Nature of the Mercy and Forgiveness of God; to shew you the exceeding Unreasonableness and Impiety of presuming upon these Attributes; to convince you, that, instead of being Encouragements to Sin, they are the strongest Arguments for the Practice of Righteousness and Virtue; that the Consideration of the Forgiveness of God is, in Truth, necessarily productive of religious Fear, is the Business of this Discourse. In which I propose,

First, To shew you, how the Forgiveness of God in general is an Argument for religious Fear.

Secondly, How the Forgiveness of God, as held forth to us in the Gospel, is more especially

especially calculated to promote religious Fear.

And, thirdly, To give you some Rules, to enable you to form a right Judgment of the Forgiveness, or indeed of any other Attribute of God. And,

First. The Forgiveness of God in general is an Argument for religious Fear. Were the Deity an unmerciful and implacable Being, all Religion would be at an End: For to what Purpose should we endeavour to serve him, whom we know we cannot help offending, and whom we conceive to be irreconcilable? Upon this Supposition, it would be just and natural to say, what is the Almighty, that we should serve him? or what Profit shall we have if we pray unto him? It is in the Hopes of Mercy, it is in the Forgiveness of God, that Religion is founded; which is nothing else but the Method of rendering the Deity propitious: And all the Variety of Religions which Mankind have devised, is owing to the different Ways by which they thought it most likely to appease an offended God. Had they thought the divine an unforgiving Nature, Religion in any Form had been useless.

Did

Did we conceive the Almighty to be implacable, he would indeed, in that Light, be the justest Object of Dread and Terror, but not of religious Fear; for that is a Fear of offending; but the other, an infallible Certainty of suffering. Thus, to the apostate Angels, he is an Object of Terror, but not of religious Fear. To them he is irreconcilable; and therefore they dread the utmost Execution of his Wrath: But to Men he is placable and forgiving; and therefore they fear him with a religious Fear: They fear to offend him; which, were their Fate fixed, would be to no Purpose.

It is surely meet to be said unto God, "if we have done Iniquity, we will do so no more." But our Encouragement to this is, that we are sensible, that if we do it no more, what we have already done shall be forgiven us. Without this Supposition, Resolutions of Amendment are useless and insignificant.

Give, therefore, what Perfection you will to all the other Attributes of God; yet, take away his Mercy and Forgiveness, and you take away the Foundation of Religion: For, without Hopes of Pardon, Religion in Creatures of such an impotent Nature as ours is,

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would be an Inconsistency. True therefore in general is the Assertion in the Text, that "there is Forgiveness with God, that he "may be feared:" And therefore the Consideration of the divine Forgiveness tends naturally to produce in us a religious Fear; the Consequence of which Fear is Obedience. But,

Secondly. If we examine into the Nature of the divine Forgiveness, as set forth to us in the Gospel, we shall find, that it is particularly calculated to promote a religious Fear.

We may perhaps imagine, that Forgiveness is in itself rather an Encouragement to Sin than otherwise: But if we consider it in the Manner in which it is proposed to us in the Gospel, there can be, in Truth, no greater nor stronger Argument against it. Obedience to the Laws of God could not be more powerfully enforced, than by this Manner of forgiving the Breach of them. God indeed forgives us our Sins; but he forgives them in such a Manner, as shews his infinite Hatred and Abhorrence of them. He spares the Sinner, without encouraging him. By the Gospel-method of Forgiveness, he has shewn himself to be an Hater of Iniquity, as well as

a Lover of Souls; just, as well as merciful; as well the righteous Judge of all the Earth, as the Father of Mercies.

Had Mankind been pardoned without any Satisfaction or Expiation at all, this might indeed have given Encouragement to Sin; for then we might have argued, that the same infinite Compassion, which so freely forgave us once, may be supposed to do it again; that the Goodness of God being always the same, there is no Reason to doubt, but that it would prompt him to renew our Pardon, as often as we had Occasion for it. Such a Forgiveness as this might indeed easily enough have proved an Encouragement to Sin. But quite contrary must be the Effect of the Gospel-forgiveness; for it carries in it the clearest Marks of the severest Wrath against it. Sin, we find by the Gospel, could not be pardoned without some Satisfaction; and of its exceeding Heinousness we may judge, by the infinite Value of the Sacrifice; for nothing less than the Blood of the Son of God, could expiate it. This Method of Forgiveness, as it is the noblest Proof of the Compassion of Almighty God for Sinners, so it is likewise the clearest of his Detestation of

Sin. This is to vindicate the Authority of the divine Laws, and yet to let the Offenders escape with Impunity. This is to reconcile (those seemingly inconsistent Attributes) Justice and Mercy. Christianity is at once the Kindness and Love of God towards Man, and the Revelation of the righteous Judgment of God. It has shewn, that Vengeance belongeth unto God, no less than Mercies and Forgivenesses. In this Dispensation, we may at once behold both the Goodness and Severity of God: His Goodness, in appointing any Sacrifice; his Severity, in accepting of none but of so infinite a Value. This is so to exercise Justice, as not to forget Mercy; and to be merciful without trampling upon Justice. This is to be propitious and terrible at once. This Forgiveness therefore is surely calculated to produce religious Fear.

Let us not therefore encourage ourselves in Wickedness, and imagine we may safely take our Fill of whatsoever our Souls lust after, because of the Mercy and Forgiveness of the Gospel; for such in Truth is the Nature of that Forgiveness, that it carries with it the
clearest

clearest Proof of the divine Abhorrence of all Ungodliness and Vice.

We may perhaps flatter ourselves, that surely the invaluable Sacrifice of the Death of Christ will be abundantly sufficient to purchase Pardon for all the little Offences such Creatures as we can possibly be guilty of: That, supposing our Offences, both in Weight and Number, even infinite; that the precious Blood of Christ is surely an Equivalent for them. But they who reason in this Manner forget that the Benefit of this precious Death is to be had only upon Conditions; that there are certain Terms proposed to us, with which if we do not comply, we have no Interest in Christ; that the Christian Dispensation is proposed to us by way of Covenant; and that therefore the Non-performance of our Part discharges the Almighty from any Obligation to make good his. He promises for Christ's Sake to forgive us our Sins, upon this express Condition, that we repent of them, and turn from them. If therefore we do not turn and repent, the Promise is void. And hence it is, that we find the preaching of the Gospel stiled in Scripture, the preaching of Repentance and Remission of Sins; that is,

not an absolute, unconditional Remission, but Remission upon Repentance. Be therefore the Sacrifice of the Death of Christ of what Value it will, yet it is of no Use or Advantage to the impenitent. Though the Satisfaction be indeed infinite, yet from its Benefit shall all the Workers of Iniquity be shut out.

Well were it for many of those, who so confidently rely upon the Merits of Christ, and with so much Pleasure dwell upon the Attribute of Forgiveness, would they seriously inquire into their own Conduct, and impartially examine, whether they can justly lay Claim to the Benefits of the Death of Christ; whether they are really Objects of that Mercy, which they so extol. Would they do this, it would prevent their imposing upon themselves in a Matter of such infinite Importance; in a Matter where their All is concerned. Would they do this, we should find them indeed adoring the truly infinite Love and Goodness of God towards Man; but instead of too confidently presuming upon that Love and Goodness, we should find them repenting, in Dust and Ashes, and abhorring themselves as guilty of the highest Ingratitude, in trampling under Foot the Son
of

of God, in doing Despite to the Spirit of Grace.

I come now, in the third place, to give you some Rules to enable you to form a right Judgment of the Forgiveness, or indeed of any other of the divine Attributes. And,

First. We may lay it down for a Rule, that that Notion of the Forgiveness, or of any other Attribute of God, which tends to the Encouragement of Wickedness and Vice, cannot be a true one. The professed Design of all Religion, is to promote the Practice of Righteousness and Virtue; to teach Men to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present World. This (I say) is the Design of all Religion, whether natural or revealed. That Notion therefore of God, or of any of his Attributes, which contradicts this Design, cannot be a true one; for this were to suppose him to act inconsistently with himself; this were to suppose him altogether such a one as ourselves, notwithstanding he has declared himself to be of purer Eyes, than even to look upon Iniquity.

In forming therefore our Judgment of the divine Attributes, let us carefully and impartially examine, whether our Notion of any

of them tends to the Promotion of Wickedness and Vice, or of true Religion and Virtue. If it tends to give the least Encouragement to Sin, however it may seem agreeable either to Reason or Revelation, we may depend upon it, it is false; For we can never be surer that any Reasoning is just, or Revelation divine, than we are of this, that God cannot be an Encourager of Wickedness. There is no safer Rule to go by than this; and well would it be for us, did we invariably observe it.

The true Notion then of the divine Forgiveness must be such, as tends to the Encouragement of Religion and Virtue. It must be such, as tends to make the Almighty feared, not despised; such, as will lead us to Repentance, instead of tempting us to continue in Disobedience.

But quite contrary to this is some Mens Opinion of this Attribute. They consider it in such a Light, as to make it the greatest Argument for Sin: For what (say they) can we be guilty of, which infinite Mercy cannot pardon? what Pollution can be so great, which the precious Blood of Christ cannot wash away? what Iniquity so heinous, which the Sacrifice of his Death cannot expiate?

True

True indeed ; there is nothing so heinous, but what, upon true and hearty Repentance, we shall be forgiven. But then remember carefully, that Repentance and Amendment are the only Terms upon which that Forgiveness is to be expected : It is to encourage us to this, that Offers of Mercy are at all made to us. The Forgiveness of God is calculated to lead us to Repentance : They therefore alone who repent, can have any Hopes of Forgiveness : They only who return to their Duty, can expect the Benefit of the Pardon : Not they, surely, who presume upon the divine Forgiveness, and make even his gracious Offers of Mercy an Argument for continuing in their Rebellion. To these the divine Forgiveness (however great) can never extend, without defeating the Design for which it is offered. But,

Secondly. Another Rule to direct us in forming a right Judgment of the Forgiveness, or of any other Attribute of God, is this ; That the Notion of any one Attribute, which is inconsistent with, or derogates from the Perfection of any other Attribute, cannot be a true one. All the Attributes of God are consistent with one another, and all of equal Perfection,

Perfection, because all of infinite Perfection. There is none greater or less than another. If, as the Son of *Sirach* tells us, "as his Majesty is, so is his Mercy;" so then likewise are his Justice and Veracity. Ridiculous then is that common Question, Whether is greater, the Justice or the Mercy of God? It is just as wise, as to ask, whether of two Infinites of the same Kind, one can be greater than the other.

If one Attribute be greater than another, then that other is not so perfect as it might be: And this contradicts one of the first Principles of Reason, which obliges us to confess, that the supreme Being is all Perfection.

Again: The Perfection of all the Attributes of God is necessary to Religion. The lessening of any one of them would be equally its Destruction. His Veracity must be perfect, to engage our Reliance and Dependence upon him: His Justice must be perfect, to leave no Hopes of Impunity to the obstinate and incorrigible: And his Mercy must be perfect, to encourage us to Repentance, upon a well-grounded Hope of Pardon on that Repentance.

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He who believes the Justice of God to be greater than his Mercy, may naturally enough be driven into Despair : He who thinks his Mercy the greater, may as naturally be led into Presumption : While he who conceives a right Notion of these Attributes, *i. e.* he who apprehends them to be both equally, because infinitely perfect, can fear, without despairing ; and hope, without presuming.

Since then we see it so necessary to the Perfection of the divine Nature, and to the Concerns of Religion, to maintain an absolute Equality among the divine Attributes, we should be extremely cautious in our Manner of considering them. We should remember, that to magnify any one Attribute, at the Expence of the rest, is by no Means to do honour to the divine Nature. The Perfection of every Attribute is equally necessary to the Perfection of God, whom (if we think rightly of) we must conceive to be all Perfection.

In forming our Judgment then of the divine Forgiveness, let us observe this Rule, and beware of exalting this Attribute, to the Prejudice of Justice and Veracity, no less essential to the Deity. When therefore we
are

are setting the divine Forgiveness in a wrong Light, and making (as we are too apt to do) an ill Use of it, a little Reflection upon the no less perfect Attributes of Justice and Truth, would soon correct our Mistake, and check our Presumption. We cannot but be sensible, that both the Justice and Truth of God are as much engaged to take Vengeance on the ungodly, as his Mercy is to save the righteous: They are Attributes of the same Perfection with the rest, and therefore must have their perfect Work, must be satisfied, as well as Mercy and Goodness, or any other Attribute whatsoever.

But thirdly. Another Rule for our Direction in forming a right Judgment of the Forgiveness, or of any other Attribute of God, is this; That that Notion of any Attribute cannot be a true one, which, however it may seem founded on some Passages of holy Scripture, taken separately, is yet inconsistent with, and contradictory to other Passages of the same Scriptures, no less plain and express. Almighty God is in Scripture, on different Occasions, represented in different Lights. Thus he is sometimes all Grace and Mercy, and at others a consuming Fire; sometimes

as plenteous in Mercy, and very pitiful,—whose Compassions fail not;—as long-suffering, full of Compassion, and slow to Anger.—We are told, that Fury is not in him;—that he refraineth for the Transgressor, that he cut him not off;—that in his Wrath he remembereth Mercy;—that he retaineth not his Anger for ever, because he delighteth in Mercy;—that he deals not with us after our Sins, nor rewards us according to our Iniquities;—that he is a God merciful and gracious, forgiving Iniquity, Transgression, and Sin;—and that to him belong Mercies and Forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him: In other Places again, he is represented as just and righteous, and as exercising Judgment in the Earth.—We are told, that the Work of a Man shall he render unto him, and cause every Man to find, according to his Ways;—that his Power and Wrath are against them that forsake him;—that he will not be slack to him that hateth him, but will repay him to his Face;—that the Soul that sinneth, it shall die;—and that to the Lord belongeth Vengeance and Recompence.

Were now a Person to be made acquainted with but one of these Descriptions, he would necessarily

necessarily conceive very wrong of the divine Being. Did he view him only in the first Light, as gracious and merciful, without the least Mention of his Justice, he would naturally be led to think, that such Goodness could not be provoked; that, do what he would, he should always be secure of Mercy and Forgiveness, from that Being, who so much delighted in Mercy, as that he seemed to seek for Opportunities of exercising it. Were he again only to hear of the other Part of the divine Character, as of his Holiness, his Justice and his Wrath, he would be tempted to consider him as an unmerciful and implacable Being; as a Being of such inflexible, unrelenting Justice, as to give no Place to Mercy. Were we (I say) to form our Judgment of Almighty God from either of these Representations of him, taken separately, we should unavoidably fall into very great Errors concerning him: We should conceive him either all Mercy, or all Wrath, according to those Passages of Scripture we were acquainted with. But would we have true and right Notions of the divine Being, the Way to come at them is, to compare the several Passages of holy Scripture which treat
of

of him together, and to see what Conclusion will be the Result of the Comparifon; to examine into the different Occafions upon which he is fpoken of, and into the Difference of the Perfons to whom he fpeaks, and this will account for his Difference of Character.

Scripture is the beft Interpreter of Scripture. The fureft, the fafeft Way, to underftand Scripture, is to compare the feveral Paflages of it together, and to explain them by one another. If then, according to this Rule, we compare what in fome Places is faid of the divine Mercy and Forgiveness, with what in others is fpoken of his Wrath and Juftice, we fhall by this come at true Conceptions, both of his Mercy and Juftice: We fhall find that they are both very confiftently maintained: We fhall find, that in the divine Nature, Mercy and Truth do meet together; that Righteoufnefs and Peace do kifs each other.

And as the Difference of the Perfons to whom the Almighty is represented as fpeaking, occasions different Representations of him; fo it helps us not a little to form a right Judgment of his true Nature: For we
find,

find, that it is to those only who are of a broken and a contrite Heart, that he is so full in his Professions of Mercy; and that it is to the hardened and impenitent only, that he is so severe in his Threatenings. From whence we conclude, that his Mercy is reserved for those only who obey him; or, who having fallen from their Duty, return to it by Repentance; and that his fiery Indignation is against those only, who treasure up to themselves Wrath against the Day of Wrath, by their Disobedience and Impenitence. We conclude the divine Character to be the same which he gives of himself, in a very plain but solemn Manner, to his Servant *Moses*. “The
“ Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious,
“ long-suffering, and abundant in Goodness
“ and Truth; keeping Mercy for Thousands,
“ forgiving Iniquity, and Transgression, and
“ Sin; and that will by no Means clear the
“ guilty;” *i. e.* I the Lord am merciful and gracious indeed to those who render themselves proper Objects of my Mercy. But lest you should thus think my Graciousness an Encouragement to Sin, know, that I am at the same time One, who will by no Means clear the guilty.

We

We are too apt to dwell upon those Passages of Scripture, which are most pleasing and comfortable to us, forgetting those, of no less Authority, which are terrible and ungrateful. We are never weary of viewing the bright Side of the Question; but the other, though equally useful, we will not once look at: We can comfort ourselves (too often without Grounds we do it) with Hopes of Mercy from God, when there is perhaps more Reason to dread his Wrath. The Promises of the Gospel we are all sure to apply to ourselves, though perhaps its Threats do more properly belong to us. Thus do we flatter ourselves in our own Sight: Thus do we speak Peace to ourselves, when in Truth there is no Peace: Thus do we impose upon ourselves in a Matter of infinite Importance, by a partial Consideration of Scripture.

The Forgiveness of God is, we have seen, designed and calculated to promote the Practice of true Religion and Virtue: It is contrived so as to raise both our Hope and our Fear; Passions of no little Use in Religion. Let us look to it then, that we do not make

it serve quite contrary Purposes ; that we do not make it a Handle for Sin. To presume upon Goodness, is Sin exceeding sinful ; the highest conceivable Pitch of Iniquity. To provoke, because we think we may do it with Impunity, and to trample upon Graciousness, is Baseness and Ingratitude, not to be equalled. But let us not deceive ourselves ; for the Mercy which should have saved us, shall, if abused, be turned into the justest and hottest Indignation, to destroy us.

I shall conclude with an excellent Passage out of the wise Son of *Sirach*. “ Say not, I
“ have sinned, and what Harm hath hap-
“ pened unto me ; for the Lord is long-suf-
“ fering, he will in no wise let thee go.

“ Concerning Propitiation, be not with-
“ out Fear, to add Sin unto Sin.

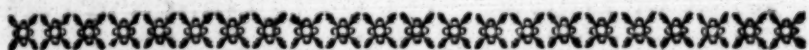
“ And say not, his Mercy is great ; he
“ will be pacified for the Multitude of my
“ Sins ; for Mercy and Wrath come from
“ him, and his Indignation resteth upon Sin-
“ ners.”

S E R M O N



S E R M O N IX.

Of pure and undefiled Religion.



St. JAMES i. 27.

*Pure Religion and undefiled before
God and the Father, is this, To
visit the Fatherless and Widows in
their Affliction, and to keep himself
unspotted from the World.*



T cannot, I apprehend, be ima-
gined, that it is the Apostle's De-
sign in this Place to give us a full
and adequate Definition of Reli-
gion ; for this, neither our own Reason, nor

other Passages of Scripture, will permit. We know very well that our Duty consists of many Branches : The Objects of it are God, our Neighbour, and ourselves : And with regard to each of these, we are under a Variety of Obligations ; which it is impossible, by any Force, to reduce to the two Particulars mentioned in the Text.

Besides, the Scriptures themselves do in other Places draw out a much longer Catalogue of Duties. We find in different Parts of those Writings, Religion and Virtue enjoined us in their full Extent. “ Whatsoever Things are true, whatsoever Things are honest, whatsoever Things are just, “ whatsoever Things are pure, whatsoever “ Things are lovely, whatsoever Things are “ of good Report ; if there be any Virtue, “ and if there be any Praise ;” these, and all of these, are recommended to us and pressed upon us in the strongest Terms.— The Truth is, the Scriptures do in no one Passage reckon up all the Instances of Duty : No ; they lie scattered throughout the sacred Volume ; and as Occasion offers, now one Instance and now another is insisted on. The whole of our Duty is not comprehended

hended in one short Sentence; but we are left to collect that from a Comparison of all the Passages in which our Duty is mentioned. These Passages are many and various: Circumstances of Times and Persons make different Subjects necessary; make it necessary more particularly to insist sometimes upon one Duty, and sometimes upon another. Hence it comes to pass, that we meet with different Descriptions of Religion; which yet, however different, are all equally just: For none of them mean to take in the *whole* of Religion, but only to describe it by some eminent Part of it; by that Part of it which is most agreeable to the Design of the Writer, and the Exigencies of those to whom he writes. They mean not to signify to us, that the particular Duties by which they characterize Religion, are *alone* Religion; but only, that they are necessary and essential Parts of Religion; that Religion cannot subsist without them; and that all Pretences to Religion, independently of them, are frivolous and vain.

To apply this Reasoning to this Description of Religion by St. *James*. Of all the

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numerous Train of Virtues, he mentions but two; Charity and Purity. What then becomes of all the rest? These two do not include them. For though by the Phrase, "keeping ourselves unspotted from the World," may possibly be understood our whole Duty to ourselves; yet Charity to the distressed will not take in our whole Duty to our Neighbour: And as for that Branch of Duty, which has God for its immediate Object, that is not so much as mentioned. Are then all these Branches of Duty discarded by the Apostle? By no Means; it is far from his Intention to insinuate as if Charity and Purity were the only Virtues that were required of us. He means not to give us a full and adequate Idea of Religion, but only to describe it by two of its eminent Branches; by those Branches, to which the Condition of those he writes to, naturally led him.

At the Time this Epistle was wrote, there were two most abominable Practices prevailing. The one; a bitter, cruel, and ill-natured Behaviour upon the Score of some religious or other Differences. These Contentions ran so high, as to be absolutely destructive

structive of that Love and Good-will, that Mercy and Compassion, which are inseparable from true Christianity. The Writers of those Times say expressly, that there were those, who maintaining Opinions contrary to the Grace of God, had no Regard to Charity, to the Widow and the Orphan, to the oppressed, to those that were in Bonds, to the hungry and thirsty.—The other was the most abandoned Diffoluteness of Manners; an open and avowed Practice of the most enormous Instances of Vice and Sensuality; and this (to make it yet more exceeding sinful) pleaded for and defended as lawful and consistent with Christianity; justified by virtue of Christian Liberty; and by that Means (as St. *Jude* elegantly expresses it) was the Grace of God turned into Lasciviousness.

Now it is evident, from several Passages in this Epistle, that the Author of it had these two Corruptions in View. Particularly, with regard to the latter, in the 21st Verse of this Chapter, he exhorts to lay aside all Filthiness and Superfluity of Naughtiness. And with regard to the former, in the Verse before the Text, he affirms, that

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if any Man seem to be religious, and bridleth not his Tongue, that Man's Religion is vain. And then, in order to confirm what he had said, he goes on, "Pure Religion
"and undefiled before God and the Father,
"is this, To visit the Fatherless and Widows in their Affliction, and to keep
"himself unspotted from the World." As if he had said, You are infinitely mistaken in your Notions of true Christian Religion: You think you may, consistently with that, indulge yourselves in an unbounded Licentiousness both of Word and Deed: You think that your pretended Zeal will justify your Uncharitableness; and Christian Liberty, your Debauchery: But do not so deceive yourselves: For Charity and Purity are great and eminent Branches of Religion: They are necessary and essential to the very Being of it. If destitute of these, all Pretences to Religion are vain and impertinent. For though they do not indeed alone constitute Religion, yet there can be no Religion without them.

Thus have we come at the Reason of this Description of Religion by the Apostle. The Circumstances of those he wrote to, required

required such a one from him. Uncharitableness and Sensuality were what they were particularly guilty of. If therefore he meant to remove these Abominations, he must consider Religion as *opposed* to them. The other Branches of Religion did not then come properly before him. It was his immediate Business to shew its Inconsistence only with Uncharitableness and Uncleaness.

If then the Circumstances of those Times required such a Description of Religion, do those of our own Times require it less? Is it less necessary *now* than it was *then*, to insist upon those two great and eminent Branches of Religion, Charity and Purity? By no Means! For Christian Charity was perhaps never at a lower Ebb than at present; and surely Licentiousness of all Kinds never ran higher.

Give me Leave therefore, in the following Discourse, to enlarge upon the Nature, Excellence, and Obligation of these two great Branches of Duty, by which the Apostle describes pure and undefiled Religion.

And

And first: For that Branch which consists in visiting the Fatherless and Widows in their Affliction.—Wherever there is Mention made in Scripture of the afflicted and distressed, we commonly find the Fatherless and Widows in that Number. In all the Precepts of Charity, they are constantly remembered: And amidst the severest temporal Judgments which the Almighty denounces against an impious Nation, this is one, that he will make their Children fatherless, and their Wives Widows.—The Fatherless and the Widows are indeed, in the general Course of Things, to be supposed of all Mankind the most helpless and forlorn. In Fact, they often are completely so. In some Respect or other, they all commonly taste the Cup of Bitterness: For the Guardian and Protector being lost in the Father and the Husband, the Fatherless and the Widow, now almost equally *Orphans*, are from thenceforwards open and exposed to the rude Invasions of a rapacious World; of a World, which, instead of pitying their Misfortune, is but too much inclined to take Advantage of their Weakness.

For

For this Reason, the Fatherless and Widows are always reckoned among the afflicted and distressed: And because they are commonly of all others the greatest Objects of Pity and Compassion, they are often put to represent the distressed in general. And so it is here; the Fatherless and Widows being but other Words for all that are in Misery and Affliction. — And what is meant by visiting them, is to succour and relieve them; to come in to their Assistance; to supply their Exigencies; to lighten their Affliction; and, in a Word, to do them all the good Offices in our Power. — But to be a little more particular in this Matter. — Man is capable of Misery from a double Cause: His Mind, as well as his Body, may be the Seat of Affliction: And as he stands in Need of Relief, in either or both of these, it is our Duty to administer it. — To an afflicted Mind (which is of all Miseries the greatest) we should administer Comfort and Consolation: We should search into the Cause of the Affliction, in order to the Application of proper Remedies. If it proceeds from Ignorance, we should endeavour to rectify the Judgment;

ment; if from too great a Tenderneſs and Scrupuloſneſs, to clear up the Doubts. If the Affliction be real and well-grounded, it muſt be either upon a ſpiritual or temporal Account. If upon the former, it muſt be Sorrow for Sin; and the infallible Cure for this is Repentance and Amendment. If upon the latter, we may produce a thouſand Arguments, to ſhew how truly contemptible all temporary Evils are: We may teach them to look upon them in their true Light, as the Chaiſtifelements and Corrections of a kind and loving Parent; and that therefore they are deſigned (and it is our own Fault if they do not answer that End) to work for us an exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory.—If it is the Body chiefly which is concerned, and the Affliction ariſes from the Want of the Neceſſaries and Conveniencies of Life, then it is our Duties, according to our ſeveral Abilities, to ſupply them. To viſit the Fatherleſs and Widows, is, in this Caſe, to give Meat to the hungry, Drink to the thirſty, Cloathing to the naked, and Lodging to the Stranger. — As to the Excellence of this Duty, our own Nature proclaims it. We cannot
help

help mourning with those that mourn, and weeping with those that weep : We share in the Sufferings of others, and exult at the relieving them. To rescue helpless Innocence from Vice and Ruin, and to dry up the Tears which run down the Widows Cheeks, is a Pleasure so exalted, as not to be conceived but by being felt ; and withal so rational a one, that he who is incapable of feeling it, is emphatically stiled inhuman, as degraded from the Rank of Humanity.— Arguments for the Obligation to this Duty may be drawn from many Topics.— The same God created us, and made us Partakers of the same Flesh and Blood :—The same precious Blood of Christ redeemed us, and incorporated us into the same Body :—The same holy Spirit sanctifies and entitles us to the same heavenly Promises. Add to these the great Weight and Stress which is laid upon the Practice of this Duty by Him, who glories in the Character of the Helper of the Fatherless, and the Defender of the Cause of the Widow ; the positive and reiterated Commands of the great Master and common Benefactor of all Mankind.

The

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The other Branch of St. *James's* Description of pure and undefiled Religion, consists in keeping ourselves unspotted from the World. This Phrase is of large Extent, and may possibly take in the whole Duty of Man, with regard to himself. But a more limited Acceptation of it seems most agreeable to one Design of this Epistle, which was, to correct Lewdness and Uncleanness: And the Term *ασπιλον*, or unspotted, favours likewise this Construction. For the Sins of this Class are represented in Scripture as carrying a peculiar Filthiness in them; as conveying to the Soul an extraordinary Stain or Pollution. To keep ourselves unspotted from the World, is to keep ourselves pure and chaste: And in order to keep ourselves so, it is not sufficient that we abstain from outward Acts of Lewdness. No! that is but a very low Degree of Virtue. Christianity is by no Means content with that: It goes to the Root of the Matter, and prevents the Conception of Lust: It regulates the Thoughts and Words, as well as Actions, and requires that they should be alike unspotted and unblemished.

And, first, for the Thoughts:—Christianity requires here the greatest Modesty and Chastity.

tity. We must not think of a Thing we should be ashamed to act; for this Reason, among others, that thinking naturally leads to Action. It is in the Mind that all Wickedness has its Origin. Being hatched here, in Time it shows itself abroad. Here it is that Lust is first conceived, which in Time bringeth forth the outward Act of Sin; which, when it is finished, bringeth forth Death.

But were it not so; were we sure that we should never become dissolute enough to proceed to Action; yet there is such a Thing as inward Corruption. The Mind is capable of Defilement, as well as the Body: And he whose Heart and Mind are defiled, is, in the Sight of God, a complete Debauchee. Abstinence from outward Action may be owing to worldly Views. Where the Mind is impure, to those Views only can it indeed be owing: For were we really and in Truth modest, we would blush at an unbecoming Thought, and be as much afraid of offending ourselves by a vicious Fancy, as the World by a vicious Action.

Chastity, like all other Virtues, is in the Mind; and as that is pure or otherwise, so
must

must the Man be denominated. God, who sees and knows the Mind, will certainly judge of him by that, however prudently he may impose on others.

If we then would be unspotted in the Sight of God, we must have unspotted Minds; we must harbour no corrupt or vicious Imagination there, but, on the contrary, banish far from them every Thing which does but so much as look that Way. We should take Care to have them clean, swept, and garnished; so indeed, as if they, like our outward Actions, were to be exposed to the public View of all Mankind.

If this Chastity of Thought were rightly considered, and its Importance duly weighed, I cannot but think, that there would be more Care taken to preserve the native Innocence of young and tender Minds. I cannot but think, that the pious Parent would use unwearied Diligence to preserve his Child from every Entertainment, of what Kind soever it be, which has the least Tendency to vitiate his Thoughts. He would with the same View keep from him all those Books and Writings, whose only Design is to poison the Mind. Neither the Politeness of the Entertainment,

tainment, nor the Elegance of the Writings, would avail any thing with him. He who is more concerned about Virtue than Fashion, would answer, that it was enough for him that both were vicious.

But at present the general Behaviour is just the reverse of this. The Youth, ere yet they are provided with the Principles of Religion, which might be a Counterpoise to the Allurements of Vice, are in a manner forced out into the Midst of every Thing which is fitted to corrupt them. Their Elders, upon whose Authority they rely, and who therefore should be their Instructors in Virtue, become preposterously their Conductors to Vice. They, under the Pretence of ushering them into the World, are continually employing them in different Scenes of Wickedness: And if ever it be represented to them, that this Conduct may possibly prove fatal to their Virtue, it is boldly answered, that a good Mind runs no Hazards. One would imagine from this, that there was no such Thing as Temptation; that Virtue was impregnable, and Innocence unconquerable.

From Thought, Religion proceeds to Language, and enjoins there likewise the same

Purity as before. Obscenity of Language, as it is the sure Indication of a foul and corrupted Heart, out of whose Abundance the Mouth always speaketh; so is it also the most injurious and offensive Thing in Nature to the Hearers. It either corrupts or disgusts them: It corrupts them, by making them familiar with Wickedness; or if it fails of that, it shocks and offends. I am surpris'd that any one who reads the Scriptures can possibly think this a slight Offence; for there is nothing which they forbid in stronger Terms; nothing which they represent as more unworthy of Saints or Christians, *i. e.* as more unbecoming the Professors of a pure and an undefiled Religion.

And yet, notwithstanding this, upon some Occasions, one would imagine, that modest Conversation was almost reputed criminal; at least, it is natural to imagine, that the Company thought they had for that Time a Licence for Dissoluteness; for they run, as it were, greedily into it, and, I am sorry to say it, are sometimes joined by that Sex, whose brightest Ornament is Modesty; and which whensoever they in any Degree put off, they sink into the vilest of the Creation.

Outward

Outward Action is the last and highest Instance of Impurity. We cannot doubt of the infinite Opposition of this to Religion, when we have just before seen how contradictory to it the lower Degrees are. It would be as endless as it is needless to cite the many Passages which condemn this Wickedness, and every Species of it. He who runs may be convinced of this, in every Page of the Oracles of God.

But, notwithstanding this, there are those, who not only practise Lewdness, but vindicate it: They plead for it, and defend it, as innocent and lawful. It is not indeed, I think, by any one pretended, that Christianity permits it; but then the Patrons of it reject Christianity for condemning it. It has been, and for ever will be, the Glory of Christianity, to have no Enemies but those who are at the same time Enemies to every Thing that is good and virtuous, and Praise-worthy, in Life: They are such as, who liking not to retain God in their Knowledge, are given over by that God whom they reject, to a reprobate Mind; which reprobate Mind they abundantly demonstrate, by their working all Uncleaness with Greediness.

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As to the Excellence of this Virtue of Purity, nothing is more conspicuous. Man is not one simple, uniform Nature, but a Composition; a Composition of Matter and Spirit, of Angel and Brute: And to one of these he approaches nearer, according to the Objects he is conversant with: He rises into the one, or sinks into the other, in proportion as what he delights in is spiritual or sensual; and of all sensual Enjoyments, those of the Kind I am speaking of tend most to debase the Man: While, on the contrary, a proper Freedom from them tends most of all Things to elevate, refine, and spiritualize his Nature: And more than that need not be said to shew the Excellence of this Virtue.

As to the Obligation of it, that has in a good Measure been already shewn. We have more than once mentioned the Detestation which Christianity expresses for every the lowest Degree of its opposite Vice.

Besides this, it offers a particular Argument or two, the more effectually to secure our Purity.—As, first, it puts us in Mind that our Saviour died to purify unto himself a peculiar People: We should therefore endeavour to answer his gracious Design, and
by

by purging ourselves from all Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, render ourselves pure, even as he is pure. Christ has besides incorporated us into the same mystical Body with himself. Our Members are therefore from thenceforward his Members likewise: And shall we then, as the Apostle observes, take the Members of Christ, and make them the Members of an Harlot? God forbid! — Again, it tells us, that our Bodies are now become the Habitation of the Holy Ghost; that he takes up his Residence in them, in order to work in us both to will and to do of his good Pleasure; that we therefore should take infinite Care to remove every Kind of Thing which may be offensive to this holy Spirit; that we should use our utmost Diligence to render them Temples in every Respect fit for the Reception of Him, who is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity. To this Purpose the Apostle reasons: “ Know ye not (says he) that ye
“ are the Temples of God; and that your
“ Body is the Temple of the Holy Ghost,
“ which is in you, which ye have of God,
“ and ye are not your own? If any Man
“ defile the Temple of God, him shall God

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“destroy : For the Temple of God is holy,
“ which Temple ye are.”

But, lastly : Heaven is absolutely unattainable but by the chaste and pure. “Neither Fornicators nor Adulterers, nor Effeminate, nor Abusers of themselves with Mankind, shall inherit the Kingdom of God.” No ! nothing can in any wise enter there, which defileth. “Blessed are the pure in Heart, for they shall see God.” They are indeed the fittest Persons for that Vision ; for they have refined their Nature into some Kind of Similitude with His : They are become like God, and therefore shall be rewarded with the Enjoyment of Him. Let us then, as we value the everlasting Enjoyment of the supreme Good, “purge ourselves from all Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, and then we shall be Vessels unto Honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master’s Use, and prepared unto every good Work.”

I shall make but one short Observation more, and conclude,—In the Beginning of this Discourse, I shewed at large, that the Apostle could not be supposed to intend us a full and complete Definition of Religion in
the

the Words of the Text. This was necessary, to prevent us from imagining, that the Observation of these two Branches of Religion which he mentions, is sufficient to entitle us to the Kingdom of God. No! that will not do: There is a Variety of other Duties, of equal Obligation, of equal Importance with these. We must be just, as well as merciful; sober and temperate, as well as pure and chaste: And we must worship God: We must offer up our continual Tribute of Prayers and Praises, and wait upon Him likewise in all his positive Ordinances, as well as discharge the Duties of Morality.

There are those, whose natural Temper in a good Measure secures their Obedience to the Branches of Religion mentioned by St. *James*. A humane Disposition relieves itself, as well as the Object of its Compassion; and a free and noble Mind spurns at lawless Pleasure, as low and unworthy. But however happy they are in this Temper, let them not boast of their Religion, unless their Conduct be uniform and of a Piece; unless they are equally unblameable with regard to all the other Precepts of the Law, to the Transgression of which they have the common

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Propensity. Let them remember, that the same Apostle, who describes Religion only by the two Articles, of visiting the Fatherless and Widows in their Affliction, and keeping ourselves unspotted from the World, in another Place affirms, “that whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet offend but in one Point, is guilty of all.”



S E R M O N



S E R M O N X.

Of our Lord's Exaltation.



I PET. iii. 22.

*Who is gone into Heaven, and is on
the Right Hand of God; Angels,
and Authorities, and Powers, being
made subject unto Him.*



IN the Scriptures of the Old Testament, the Christ or Messiah is represented to us under very different and opposite Characters. Sometimes he is described as a Man of Sor-
rows,

rows, and acquainted with Grief; as despised and rejected of Men; as bearing the Grievs and carrying the Sorrows of others; as bruised for their Iniquities, and wounded for their Transgressions; as stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. He is said to have Gall given him for Meat, and when he was thirsty, Vinegar to drink. His Hands and his Feet are said to have been pierced; his Soul to have been poured out unto Death, and his Grave to have been made with the wicked. In short, he is represented as destitute, afflicted, tormented; so indeed, as to make it emphatically true, that there never was Sorrow like unto his Sorrow.

At other Times he is set forth as a great and mighty Prince, as a King reigning and prospering; as sitting upon the Throne of his Father *David*, and as reigning over the House of *Jacob* for ever. Of the Increase of his Government and Peace, there is said to be no End, upon the Throne of *David* and upon his Kingdom, to order it and to establish it with Justice and with Judgment, even for ever. In a Word, as in some Places he is represented in the most forlorn and miserable Circumstances of human Nature, so in others,
the

the highest and most exalted Pitch of Felicity and Glory is ascribed to him.

Now, the Church having already commemorated the several Circumstances of the Humiliation and Sufferings of her beloved, from the Womb to the Grave; at the present Season, which is *all* Festival, she calls upon us to shift the Scene; to view him in his exalted and triumphant State; to consider him now as risen from the dead and entered into his Glory.

The Exaltation of our blessed Saviour shall then be my present Subject. And my Purpose is to shew you,

First, That the Glory and Exaltation of our Saviour Christ, are the Rewards and Consequences of his Humiliation and Sufferings.

Secondly, In what his Exaltation consists, and the Truth and Reality of it.

Thirdly, What are the Inferences deducible from it.

And, first: The Glory and Exaltation of our Saviour Christ, are the Rewards and Consequences of his Humiliation and Sufferings.

From the different Circumstances in which the Messiah is represented in Scripture, from
the

the Depth of Misery into which he is sometimes depressed, and from the Height of Majesty and Glory to which at others he is raised, the modern *Jews* have taken Occasion to pretend that there are two Messiahs; Messiah, *Ben-Joseph*; and Messiah, *Ben-David*; the former a suffering, the latter a conquering Messiah. But if we look into the Scriptures, we shall find, that this Conceit has no Foundation there; for the Scriptures do plainly suppose but one Messiah, *viz.* Messiah the Son of *David*; however, upon different Occasions, he is differently described. It is the same Person that is sometimes represented as the most afflicted of the Sons of *Adam*; and at others, as King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. It is of the same Person that the greatest Misery and the greatest Happiness are affirmed; and not only so, but the Glory and Exaltation of the Messiah are always represented as the Rewards and Consequences of his Humiliation and Sufferings. It is because his Sufferings were so extraordinary, that his Rewards are so immense. “ Thus (in the
“ Prophet *Isaiab*) therefore (for the Reason
“ of his Sufferings before recounted) will I
“ divide him a Portion with the great, and
“ he

“ he shall divide the Spoil with the strong ;
“ because he hath poured out his Soul unto
“ Death.” His voluntary Effusion of his
Blood was the Cause and Foundation of the
exceeding Weight of Glory with which af-
terwards he was rewarded. And in the same
Light do the Writers of the New Testament
consider the glorious Exaltation of the Mes-
siah. Thus St. *Paul* to the *Philippians* :
“ Wherefore” (that is, upon the Account of
his humbling himself, and becoming obe-
dient unto Death, even the Death of the Cross,
as he had just mentioned) “ God also hath
“ highly exalted him, and given him a Name
“ which is above every Name ; that at the
“ Name of Jesus, every Knee should bow,
“ of Things in Heaven, and Things in Earth,
“ and Things under the Earth.” And our
Saviour himself seems to reason in the same
Manner, when discoursing of himself in the
third Person. He says, “ Ought not Christ
“ to have suffered these Things, and to enter
“ into his Glory ? Ought not the Messiah
“ first to suffer those Things which *Moses*
“ and the Prophets did say he should suffer ;
“ and then, as the Rewards and Consequen-
“ ces of these Sufferings, to enter into his
“ Glory ?”

“Glory?” And indeed it is but reasonable to imagine, that Sufferings so extraordinary should meet with proportionable Rewards. It is natural to think, that as Humanity never endured so much as in the Person of Christ, that therefore in his Person it should meet with the most glorious Recompence. For it is to be observed, that it is only of the *Man* Christ Jesus that these Things are affirmed; his *divine Nature* being equally incapable of Humiliation and Exaltation. The Glory and Exaltation of Christ are therefore the Rewards and Consequences of his Humiliation and Sufferings. Because he was made lower than the Angels for the suffering of Death, therefore is he crowned with Glory and Immortality.

Let us now, in the second Place, inquire, in what the Glory and Exaltation of Christ does consist. The holy Scriptures express the Glory and Exaltation of Christ by his ascending into Heaven, and sitting at the right Hand of God. Thus St. *Mark* tells us, that after the Lord had spoken unto his Disciples, he was received up into Heaven, and sat on the right Hand of God. He is said in another Place to have ascended up far
above

above all Heavens,—and to have sat down far above all Principality and Power, and every Name that is named ;—Angels, and Authorities, and Powers, being made subject unto him. Now, by these Expressions is understood the highest and most exalted Pitch of Glory, Greatness, and Happiness. By ascending into Heaven, is understood his entering into the immediate Presence of God ; in which Presence there is Fulness of Joy. And by sitting at the right Hand of God, is expressed the highest Degree of Glory and Honour. When Angels, and Authorities, and Powers, are said to be subject unto him, it informs us, that the whole Creation (the noblest and most exalted Beings in it not excepted) is subject to his universal Dominion ; that the Government of the Universe is upon his Shoulders ; that he is King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, and, in a Word, Head over all Things. In this then consists the Exaltation of Christ, that he is received into the highest Heavens, into the immediate Presence of God, and is there honoured with the most exalted Situation, even with sitting at the right Hand of the Majesty on high ; and that
he

he is invested with an universal Dominion over the whole Creation.

If the Truth of this Exaltation be called in question,

As to the first Part of it, his Ascension into Heaven; this was a Fact of which they who relate it were Eye-witnesses; and therefore a Fact in which they could not be mistaken. Thus we are told, that while they beheld, he was taken up, and a Cloud received him out of their Sight; and moreover, that while they were looking stedfastly into Heaven as he went up, two Men stood by them in white Apparel, and said unto them, "Ye Men of *Galilee*, why stand ye gazing up into Heaven? This same Jesus, who is taken from you into Heaven, shall so come in like Manner as ye have seen him go into Heaven." Here is a Fact said to have come to pass before the Eyes of the Relators: And a Fact so remarkable in itself, and attended with so remarkable a Circumstance as the Apparition of two Angels, we may be sure, employed the utmost Attention of the Beholders. They could not therefore be deceived themselves; nor would they deceive us, because they could get nothing by

by the Deceit; but, on the contrary, by their adhering to it, exposed themselves to all the Evils that either Men or Devils could invent.

As to our Saviour's sitting at the right Hand of God, that indeed is a Truth for which we cannot have the Evidence of Sense; but it is not, for that Reason, the less certain; for by Christ's sitting at the right Hand of God, is meant no more than his being raised to the greatest Degree of Power and Glory. This is an Article of Revelation, and consequently its Truth must stand upon the same Footing with that of the whole Revelation in which it is contained. However, we may add somewhat more;—we may be said to have *Experience* of the Truth of it: For, not long after his Ascension, he manifested his Power, giving Gifts unto Men; by his sending down the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, in so miraculous and astonishing a Manner. The sending of the Holy Ghost was a demonstrative Proof of his being seated on the right Hand of God, or of his being invested with sovereign Authority. And thus St. *Peter* reasons: “Therefore (says he) being
“by the right Hand of God exalted, and
VOL. II. P “having

“ having received of the Father the Promise
“ of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth
“ this which ye now see and hear.” Our
Saviour, before his Ascension, declared, that
all Power was to be given unto him in Heaven
and in Earth : And the miraculous Effusion
of the Holy Ghost, and the infinite Number
of wonderful Works which he enabled his
Disciples to perform, for the Establishment of
his Religion, were indisputable Proofs that
he was in Truth endued with all the Power
he expected.

Having now seen in what the Exaltation
of Christ does consist, and the Truth and
Reality of it, let us proceed, in the third
Place, to inquire, what Inferences are dedu-
cible from it. And,

First. From the Exaltation of Christ, we
may infer the Force and Efficacy of his In-
tercession. We may be sure, that he who is
admitted into the highest Heavens, and is
there seated on the right Hand of God, can
be refused nothing which he shall ask for us.
He who is so highly honoured, must surely
be a most powerful Advocate. If any Man
sin therefore, he has an Advocate with the
Father, even an Advocate seated at his right
Hand.

Hand. He cannot therefore doubt of Pardon, if he applies to this powerful Advocate in a proper Manner : We may depend upon having whatsoever we shall properly ask, since our Intercessor is not to be denied. Nothing can make us rely upon the Intercession of our Redeemer, if this Reflection cannot, That he is set down with God the Father on his Throne. " Seeing then (says the Apostle) " that we have a great High Priest, who is " passed into the Heavens, Jesus the Son of " God, let us hold fast our Profession. Let " not our Hearts be troubled ; neither let " them be afraid, since our great High Priest, " who was sacrificed for us, is gone within " the Veil, into the most holy Place, into " the immediate Presence of God, there to " plead the invaluable Merits of that Sacrifice on our behalf." The holy Scriptures do indeed all along suppose the Ascension and Exaltation of Christ as the strongest Arguments for Trust and Confidence in him. Thus we are told, that Christ is not entered into the holy Places made with Hands, which were only the Figures of the true ; but into Heaven itself, there to appear in the Presence of God for us. We may therefore come

boldly unto the Throne of Grace, to obtain Mercy, and find Grace to help in Time of Need. "Who is he that condemneth?" says *St. Paul* to the *Romans*. "It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right Hand of God, who also maketh Intercession for us." In short, this is the Consolation, this the Anchor of our Souls, that we have an High Priest, who is set on the right Hand of the Throne of the Majesty in the Heavens, and who is therefore able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God through him.

If then we have so powerful, so mighty an Intercessor, even at the right Hand of God, how absurd is it in the Church of *Rome*, how injurious to this great Intercessor, to have Recourse to any other? The Intercessors they apply to were themselves Sinners, and therefore can have no Merits to plead: They are not appointed by God for that Purpose, and therefore have no Authority: Nor is it known to what Degree of Power and Greatness they are advanced. But be it what it will, we are sure it is infinitely inferior to his, who is seated at the right Hand of God. To what Purpose therefore is it to have Recourse

course to such Intercessors, when we have already one, who has the Merits of an invaluable Sacrifice to plead, the divine Commission to authorise him, and who is advanced to the highest and most exalted Dignity, even to sit at the right Hand of God? Can it be imagined, that any Intercessor will prevail, if he cannot, who is above all Principality and Power, and every Name that is named? Will the Almighty Father have Regard to the Petitions of his Servants, and be deaf to those of his beloved Son? The Scriptures tell us, that our Redeemer is strong, and that he will thoroughly plead our Cause: But, surely, the Church of *Rome* must suspect either his Ability or his Inclination to plead it, or they would not have Recourse to such a Number of others of their own appointing. To apply to other Intercessors, is therefore the highest Injury to the one only true Mediator between God and Man, the Man Christ Jesus: And it is besides an improbable Method of succeeding in our Petitions, since no Intercession can be depended on, if his cannot, who is ascended into Heaven, and sitteth at the right Hand of God.

Secondly. From the Exaltation of Christ we may conclude, that his Church shall be for ever protected and defended, and that the Gates of Hell shall never be able to prevail against it. Let then all the Powers of Darkness put forth their utmost Force and Cunning, they shall be overcome by him who is endued with all Power; they shall be defeated by him who taketh the wise in their own Craftiness. Let therefore the Church of Christ be attacked by Viciousness from within, or by Infidelity from without; it shall still stand its Ground; fixed and immovable, like an House which is built upon a Rock. Whosoever shall fall upon this Stone, shall be broken; Whosoever shall attempt to destroy the Church of God, shall be defeated and ruined by the Attempt: But the Church will go on conquering and to conquer; He who sitteth in the Heavens will laugh at its Enemies; the Lord will have them in Derision. Let us not therefore fear, though the Earth be moved, and though the Hills be carried into the Midst of the Sea; though the Waters thereof rage and swell, and though the Mountains shake at the Tempest of the same.

And

And let all her Members comfort themselves with this Reflection, that their common Head is in Heaven, at the right Hand of God, invested with all Power and Dominion; and that therefore, whatever Evils befall either the Church in general, or themselves in particular, do not proceed from Want of Power to prevent or remove them, in the great Captain of our Salvation, but from the Mercy and Loving-kindness of our tender Father.

Thirdly. The Exaltation of Christ wipes away all Reproach of the Cross. It was objected to the primitive Christians by their Heathen Adversaries (and may perhaps be now objected to us by our modern Heathens) that they were the Followers of a crucified Master; that he whom they worshipped was put to the most cruel and ignominious Death; that he suffered between two Thieves; himself, as a Malefactor of a worse Sort; as a Magician, a Deceiver of the People, and a Mover of Sedition. But to these Objections the Exaltation of Christ furnishes us with abundant Answer. We can reply, that he who underwent so much Misery, is now, for that very Reason, in infinite Happiness; that

he who suffered so much Ignominy, is now in inconceivable Glory; that he who was made lower than the Angels, indeed than the lowest of the Scns of *Adam*, is now made higher than the Heavens; and that he who was put to Death between two Thieves, is alive for evermore at the right Hand of God.

Fourthly. If Christ be ascended into Heaven, and is there invested with kingly Power, we should remember what our Duty is to him as our King. If he be a King, where is his Honour? if a Master, where is his Fear? Our Duty to our King is to honour his Person, and obey his Laws. This Service then does our heavenly King expect at our Hands. He performs his Part, in protecting and defending us from all our Enemies: The Return due from us, is Honour and Obedience. And let us remember, that he is a King infinite in Justice, and armed with almighty Power; and that therefore he will surely confer the highest Rewards upon his obedient Subjects, and will execute the severest Vengeance upon those who contemn his Authority, and disobey his Laws.

Fifthly. The Ascension of Christ was the completing his Triumph over all the Powers

Powers of Darkness. When he ascended up on high, he led Captivity captive : He led them captive whose Captives we were, namely, Death, and him that had the Power of Death ; that is, the Devil. His Resurrection was the Beginning, his Ascension the Completion, of his Victory.

Sixthly. From the Ascension of Christ, we must necessarily infer our own Ascension. As the Resurrection of Christ and ours imply each other, so also does his Ascension and ours. " If Christ be preached that he rose " from the dead, how say some among you " (says the Apostle) that there is no Resur- " rection of the dead ? But if there be no " Resurrection of the dead, then is not Christ " risen. In like Manner, if Christ be ascend- " ed into Heaven, we must also thither ascend ; " but if we ascend not, then is Christ not " ascended. But Christ our first Fruits is " ascended, and the first Fruits are a Pledge " and Earnest of an Harvest that is to follow." Christ is said to have entered into that, within the Veil, into the Heavens, as our Fore-runner. We therefore are surely to follow after him. Indeed, were not we also to ascend, the Ascension of Christ would be of no Use
nor

nor Consequence to us; nor, without our Ascension, would his own be a complete Triumph. The War was undertaken upon our Accounts; and therefore, in bringing us to Happiness, did the Victory consist.

But besides this, our Saviour has promised, that he will come and take us into the same Place whither he himself is gone before. He tells us, that in his Father's House are many Mansions; and that the Design of his leaving us for a Time, was to prepare a Place for us, that where he is, there we may be also.

The Ascension of Christ has then opened a Way for us into the holiest of all. The everlasting Gates are opened to this King of Glory, and all his faithful Subjects shall follow him in Triumph. Thus then, "the
" Breaker is come up before us, we have
" broken up and have passed through the
" Gate; our King is passed before us, and
" the Lord at the Head of us."

Seventhly. If we believe that Christ is ascended in the Heavens, and that we also shall shortly follow him, we should even now, in Heart and Mind, thither ascend. If we are ascended with Christ, we should seek those Things that are above, where Christ

fitteth

sitteth at the right Hand of God: We should endeavour to prepare our Minds for the Enjoyments of the Place for which we are designed: We should consider ourselves as Strangers and Pilgrims upon the Earth. Heaven is our Home, our proper Country, and therefore our Conversation should be always there. We should be dead to the World, and all its Enjoyments: We should wean ourselves as much as possible from the Pleasures of Sense, and make ourselves familiar with spiritual Delights: We should set our Affections on Things above, and not on Things on the Earth.

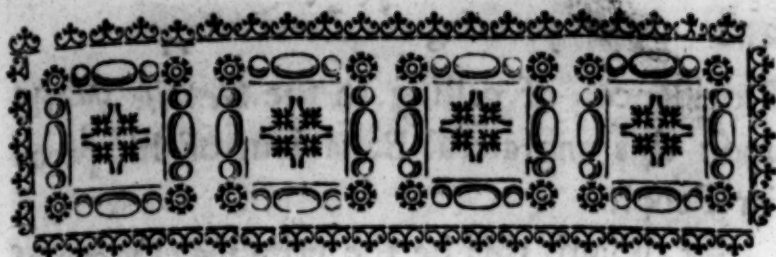
Lastly. We should remember what the Angels, who attended our Saviour at his Ascension, told his Disciples; That this same Jesus, who was taken from them into Heaven, should so come in like Manner as they had seen him go into Heaven; that he should descend with the same, or greater Glory, in which he now ascended. He tells us himself, that he should come in the Clouds of Heaven, with Power and great Glory; in his own Glory, and in his Father's, and in the holy Angels. The Design of this his second Coming, is to judge the World in Righteousness,

ness, to reward the faithful Subjects of his Kingdom, and to take Vengeance on his Enemies.

Let this Saying therefore sink down into our Hearts, and let it influence our Conduct; and let us pray without ceasing, that at the second Coming of our Lord in his glorious Majesty, to judge both the quick and the dead, we may be caught up in the Clouds to meet the Lord in the Air, and so be for ever with the Lord.

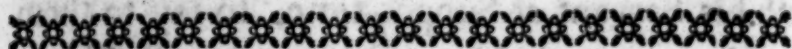


SERMON



S E R M O N XI.

*Of the Duty of frequenting the
Lord's Supper, and the In-
excuseableness of neglecting it.*



St. LUKE xiv. 18.

*And they all with one Consent began
to make Excuse.*

THE Parable, of which these Words
are a Part, was intended to set forth
the Perverseness and Obstinacy of
the *Jews* in rejecting the Dispensation of the
Gospel, to which they were first invited;
and to make known the gracious Design of
Providence,

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Providence, of calling in the *Gentile* World upon this ungrateful Behaviour of his peculiar People.

But though this be the principal Design of the Parable, yet it may nevertheless be very fitly applied to all those, who upon worldly, or any other Motives, neglect the great Salvation of the Gospel; who chuse rather to enjoy the Pleasures of Sin for a Season, than to secure their Title to that infinite Recompence of Reward which it proposes. "A
" certain Man (says the Parable) made a
" great Supper, and bade many; and sent
" his Servant at Supper-time, to say to them
" that were bidden, Come, for all Things
" are now ready; and they all with one Con-
" sent began to make Excuse. The first said
" unto him, I have bought a Piece of Ground,
" and I must needs go and see it; I pray thee,
" have me excused. And another said, I
" have bought five Yoke of Oxen, and I go
" to prove them; I pray thee, have me ex-
" cused. And another said, I have married
" a Wife; and therefore I cannot come."
By this Invitation to a great Supper, is represented the Invitation of the *Jews* to the Blessings and Privileges of the Gospel; and by
it

it may be understood, the general Invitation of all Mankind to the everlasting Happiness it proposes. The several Excuses offered for the Non-acceptance of the Invitation, shews the universal Rejection of Christianity by the *Jews*; and moreover insinuates, that Worldly-mindedness was the Cause of that Rejection. Nor may this less properly be applied to those, who, through too great a Fondness for the Business and Pleasures of this Life, overlook the one Thing needful, the Salvation of their Souls.

But again. The Meaning of this Parable may be carried one Step further still; for it is particularly applicable to those Persons, who are unmoved by all Invitations to come to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The Parable, I say, is peculiarly applicable to these Persons: For the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is not only the highest and most sacred Ordinance of the Christian Religion, and that Ordinance by which the Benefits of the New Covenant are in a more especial Manner conveyed to us; but it is moreover that Part of Christian Duty, for the Neglect of which the greatest Number of idle and frivolous Excuses have been devised; and a Part of
Duty,

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Duty, in the continued Neglect of which so many live ; and which, without having ever once performed, so many die, that it may be justly said, that all with one Consent begin to make Excuse. — It was with a View to this Application of the Parable, that I pitched upon Part of it for the Subject of this Discourse. And my present Design is,

First, To lay before you the absolute, indispensable Obligation upon all that embrace the Christian Religion, to a frequent Participation of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. And,

Secondly, To expose the Weakness and Insufficiency of the several Excuses which are offered for the Neglect of it.

And, first : All who embrace the Christian Religion are indispensibly obliged to a frequent Participation of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Now this will easily appear, if we consider for what Ends and Purposes this Sacrament was ordained.

And, first : It was ordained for the continual Remembrance of the Death and Passion of our Saviour Jesus Christ. “ Do this (says he) in remembrance of me.” It is surely reasonable, that the exceeding great Love of
our

our Saviour in dying for us, should be for ever most thankfully and gratefully remembered : And the only Way of perpetuating the Memory of this astonishing Instance of Love, was to institute holy Mysteries, to be standing Memorials of it.

One would think now, that much Persua-⁷ sion is not necessary to make us take every Opportunity of commemorating this exceeding great Love of our Master and only Saviour. Gratitude, were there nothing else, should prompt us to it. The Son of God himself has wrought the greatest Deliverance for us, and that at the Price of his own most precious Blood : And his last Commands were, to observe an easy, agreeable, and significant Rite, in memory of what he had done for us. Is it possible to be insensible of the infinite Obligations he laid upon us ? Is it possible to be forgetful of his last and easy Command ? Had he required some great Thing at our Hands, had he enjoined the Observance of the most painful and burdensome Rites, in memory of his Death and Sufferings ; Gratitude, methinks, should have made the Burden light. But how black must our Ingratitude be, when we will not com-

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memorate his Passion, though the Way he has appointed of doing it, is to eat and drink at his Table? And to eat and drink at his Table, instead of being a Burthen, is our Honour and our Happiness.

Did we consider how little Impression spiritual Things do generally make upon us, and consequently how easily that little Impression is worn out, we should soon perceive the Wisdom and Goodness of God, in appointing some outward and visible Signs, some sensible Memorials of those spiritual Things which should for ever be the Subject of our Meditation. Our Happiness, our eternal Happiness, depends upon our having a lively Sense of the great and marvellous Things that have been done for us : And the most effectual Way to produce and cherish in us this lively Sense, is frequently to partake of the holy Sacrament, which was ordained for that very End and Purpose. And surely nothing could be better calculated for this Design : For in this Sacrament we behold, as it were, the Body broken, and the Blood poured out. Every Circumstance of the Death and Passion of our Saviour is brought into our Memories ; and, as it were, even before our
Eyes,

Eyes, Jesus Christ is evidently set forth crucified among us.

But, secondly: By partaking of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, we apply to ourselves the Death and Merits of our Saviour. It is a laying hold on the Atonement; and by virtue of that Atonement, on eternal Life. It is a Confession of our Need of a Sacrifice, and of our Trust in the Sacrifice of the Death of Christ. It is an acknowledging that we wanted a Redeemer, and that Jesus Christ is the Redeemer, to whom we fly for Succour. In a Word, the commemorating the Death of our Saviour in this Sacrament of his own Appointment, is a flying to the Merits of his Death for Pardon and Mercy: It is a laying hold of that Pledge of his Love which he himself has offered us: It is a partaking of his most blessed Body and Blood.

Can we then be too frequent in applying to ourselves the Merits of the Death of Christ? Can we too eagerly or too frequently lay hold on the Atonement? Can we too often confess our own Unworthiness? or express our deep Sense of the infinite Value of that Sacrifice which was offered for us? too often acknowledge our Need of a Redeemer, or too

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often adore the Goodness of him who undertook that Office for us? Can we be too diligent in securing our Part in this invaluable Sacrifice? And, in a Word, considering our daily and manifold Transgressions, can we be too constant in resorting to this Fountain opened for Sin and for Uncleaness?

But, thirdly: The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is designed as a Means of Grace; as the Means of conveying to us the Assistance of God's holy Spirit; as a Means of deriving upon us all the Benefits of that Death which it commemorates.

The natural Weakness and Insufficiency of Man for the full and perfect Discharge of his Duty, is a daily Complaint; and of all the Excuses urged for his transgressing it, the most popular and common. Before the Appearance of the Gospel, there might indeed have been some Justice in the Complaint, and Weight in the Excuse: But by the Christian Religion, the Foundation of both is destroyed. Inability can now be no longer either complained of, or pleaded in Excuse, when abundant Sufficiency is given us of God. Tho' naturally and of ourselves we are not able so much as to think a good Thought, yet now
we

we can do all Things through Christ, which strengtheneth us. The Assistance of the holy Spirit of God is now promised to all that ask it; to all that apply for it in a due and proper Manner: And the properest Manner of applying, the likeliest Way of obtaining this almighty Assistance, is frequently to partake of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.— The Sacrament is indeed naturally a Means of Grace. Every Circumstance of it is apt to produce and cherish in us Piety and Virtue: It is our spiritual Food and Sustenance. Our Souls are as much strengthened and refreshed by the Body and Blood of Christ, as our Bodies are by Bread and Wine.

But the Sacrament is not only a natural Means of making us grow in Grace, but it is likewise ordained as a Means of Grace: It is appointed by Christ himself as the Channel through which all the Assistances of his Spirit, all the Benefits of his Death, shall be peculiarly conveyed to us. It is his own Ordinance, and an Ordinance to which all his Promises are annexed; and we know, that He is faithful who hath promised.

A Sense therefore of our own Insufficiency, and consequently of our Need of the divine

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Aid and Assistance, should prompt us to have continual Recourse to that Ordinance, upon the due Performance of which, we shall be supplied with sufficient Strength. It will be in vain any longer to complain of our natural Inability ; or by alledging it, to endeavour to palliate our Offences. We have it in our Power to remove the Evil we complain of, Our natural Defects we know where and how to supply. We must therefore no longer bewail our Incapacity, but make Use of the Assistance.

Would we then be Proof against all the fiery Darts of the wicked ; would we be sufficient to overcome the Lust of the World, the Lust of the Eye, and the Pride of Life ; would we be furnished with Strength and Resolution enough to make good all our Vows of Repentance and Amendment, and what we have promised ; would we be able also to perform ; we should have Recourse to this divine Ordinance with a devout and penitent Heart, and we should soon perceive that Christ's Grace is sufficient for us ; sufficient in the requisite Degree ; in such a Degree, as will render us acceptable to God, and is consistent with our present State : For it is
not

not expected, because not promised, that it should render us sinless and impeccable.

Fourthly. By partaking of the Lord's Supper, we ratify and renew our baptismal Vow. Baptism, however violated, is never to be repeated. This Defect the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper supplies: The broken Vows of Baptism are here repeated and renewed. By partaking of this Sacrament, we shew our Continuance in the Christian Faith. All the Vows and Promises we entered into at our Baptism, we ratify and confirm; and renew our Obligations, where we find we have broken them.

It is a great Instance of the Goodness of God, that he will allow us any Means of renewing our Faith: And surely we, who are so conscious to ourselves of such numberless Violations of Vows and Promises, should fly to this Method with all Gratitude and Sincerity.

If then the partaking of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper be a Renewal and Ratification of our baptismal Vows, what shall we say of those many Persons, who spend their whole Lives in a total Neglect of it? Are they in Truth Christians? Have they any

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Title to that high Appellation? Have they ever shewed their Christianity, by partaking in its distinguishing Ordinance? Have they any Part in the Benefits of that Death, which they never commemorate? any Claim to those Merits, or that Atonement, which they never apply to themselves, which they never lay hold of? They were, it is true, baptized in their Infancy (thanks to the Piety of their Parents!) and by that Means admitted into the Christian Church: But, since their Arrival at full Age, have they ever in their own Persons vowed to perform what was then undertaken for them by others? On the contrary, do not they seem to renounce that Covenant which they neglect to confirm?

I have now laid before you some of the principal Ends and Uses of the Sacrament; and we have seen that every one of these Ends affords us a most powerful Argument for a frequent Participation of it. But there is another, and that an irresistible Argument, still behind; and that is, the positive Command of God. “Do this (says our Saviour) in remembrance of me.—This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.”—This Sacrament he instituted in Person, the
Night

Night before he suffered; and left it his dying Command to all his Followers, to observe that sacred Rite, in memory of what he had done for them,

Let this Saying then sink down into our Hearts, and let it influence our Conduct: Let us remember, that we are obliged to a constant Participation of this Sacrament, not only in Gratitude to our dying Saviour (though methinks that were enough) but also in Obedience to our Sovereign Lord.

Having thus shewed the indispensable Obligation of all that embrace the Christian Religion, to a frequent receiving of the holy Sacrament,

I proceed, in the next Place, to expose the Weakness and Insufficiency of the many Excuses which are offered for the Neglect of it.

And the first and most common Excuse, is that of worldly Business. It is urged, that they are so taken up with the Cares and Business of Life, so employed in making a necessary Provision for themselves and Families, that they are not at Leisure to prepare themselves as they ought for so sacred and solemn an Ordinance. One Time they have bought a Piece of Ground, and they must needs go
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and see it ; at another, they have bought five Yoke of Oxen, and they must go to prove them ; at a third, they have married a Wife, and therefore they cannot come ; though, on that Occasion, it is more particularly required that they should come.

Now, the very offering of this Excuse of worldly Business, is the greatest Insult upon the Majesty of Heaven that can be imagined. It is plainly to confess, that they are more concerned about their temporal than their eternal Interest ; about the Affairs of the World, than the Service of God. It is an open Declaration, that since God and Mammon cannot be both served, Mammon is the Master they have chosen. To offer this Excuse is (I say) plainly to confess thus much ; and therefore this Plea carries the highest Impiety along with it ; and so, instead of lessening, aggravates our Crime.

But are they really in earnest, who think thus to excuse themselves ? Do they think that their Sovereign Lord will overlook their Neglect of his Service, because they are so extremely diligent in their own ? And, if they are persuaded he will not (as they must be, if they reflect at all) do they think that
temporal

temporal Prosperity is an Equivalent for the Loss of Heaven? or that the present Welfare of their Bodies is more to be wished for, than the everlasting Ruin of their Souls is to be dreaded? Do they think that they would be Gainers by the Bargain, if they should purchase the whole World at the Expence of their Souls? If not, do not then let your Solicitude about the trifling Affairs of this World rob you of the Reward, and involve you in the Misery, of the next. Seek the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness in the first Place: For to make this your chief and principal Care, is not a vain Thing, but it is your Life.

But again: There is no Man so altogether taken up with the Business of Life, but what (had he a willing Mind) could easily find Time for the Business of Religion; particularly to prepare himself for the Reception of the holy Sacrament. The Fault is certainly not in the too great Business, but in the Heart. Were that right, we should find Intervals enough for the Service of Religion, and the Care of our Souls. Nay, even in the very Midst of Business, we should often employ our Minds on that great Affair.

But,

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But, secondly : Another Excuse which Men offer for their Neglect of the holy Sacrament, is, that they are unprepared ; that they are grievous Sinners, and therefore dare not come to that holy Table. Now this Excuse carries its own Condemnation with it : For if they are unprepared, why are they so ? Why do they not prepare ? If they are grievous Sinners, why do they not repent and amend ? This is to excuse one Fault with another. Repent and amend they must, whether they receive the Sacrament or no, if they expect to go to Heaven. But indeed all Repentance is lame and imperfect, till it is confirmed by this Ordinance.

If they are indeed unprepared, if they are in Truth such enormous Sinners as they represent themselves, they are undoubtedly in the right to abstain from these holy Mysteries, while they continue so. But this Excuse will stand them in no Stead : For, come what will of the Sacrament, this Wickedness must be forsaken, and consequently the Foundation of the Excuse removed.

This Excuse of being unprepared, if pursued through its just Consequences, will debar those that plead it from every other Office of Religion,

Religion, as well as from the Sacrament. It should as well keep them from Prayers: For the Prayers, as well as the Sacrifices of the Wicked, are an Abomination in the Sight of the Lord.

They that make this Excuse flatter themselves that their absenting from the Sacrament proceeds from an awful Sense of that venerable Solemnity, and a Tenderness of Conscience. I do not say, but that this may sometimes be the Case. But the true Reason generally is, that they are unwilling and indisposed to repent and amend. They are (they say) unqualified for the Sacrament, and therefore dare not come. But why then do they not set about the preparing themselves? Because they will not abandon their Lusts and Appetites; because they have some favourite Vice, which they cannot think of parting with. A worthy receiving the holy Sacrament, they know, would oblige them to forsake all these; would oblige them to crucify the Flesh, with the Affections and Lusts; and therefore the Sacrament is an Ordinance for which they cannot think of preparing.

Thirdly.

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Thirdly. It is alledged, that it is much safer entirely to abstain from the Lord's Supper, than to run the dreadful Risk of taking it unworthily; since the Apostle tells us, that "he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh Damnation to himself."

In answer to which, let us, in the first Place, observe, that the original Word (*κρίσις*) is improperly rendered Damnation: The Word truly signifies no more than Judgment, or Condemnation. That it cannot signify eternal Damnation in this Place, is evident, because the Apostle tells us, that the Damnation here mentioned is to prevent that in the World to come. "It is" (says he) a "Chastisement of the Lord, that they should not be condemned with the World." Indeed this Text has a particular Relation to some peculiar Abuses of this Ordinance committed by the *Corinthians*, and to the Punishments inflicted upon them for those Abuses; which were divers Diseases, and sundry Kinds of Death: "For, for this Cause (says the Apostle) many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep."

But,

But, secondly : Be the Danger of unworthy receiving what it will, it is our Duty to receive : We have the positive Command of God for it : And it is certainly in our Power to receive worthily, or it would not, it could not, be required at our Hands.

But, thirdly : Are they afraid that unworthy receiving will expose them to Damnation, in the highest Sense of that Word, even to eternal ? Their Fears are just : If unrepented of, it most certainly will. But then they should remember, that so will the unworthy Use of every other Branch of Religion. It is true indeed, that as the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is the highest and most solemn Part of Christian Worship, a Profanation of it is attended with greater Degrees of Guilt, than the Profanation of any other Part : And this indeed is a sufficient Reason for us, to be more than ordinary careful of being rightly prepared for this Ordinance, but no Excuse for neglecting it.

The last Excuse I shall at present mention, which is offered for the Neglect of the holy Sacrament, is the Danger of relapsing after having communicated ; for then, it is urged, our latter End will be worse than our Beginning ;

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ning; and that there will be no more Place for Repentance, though we seek it earnestly with Tears. This is to revive the ancient Heresy of the *Novatians*. Those Heretics reasoned in the same Manner with regard to the other Sacrament; that of Baptism. They asserted, that he that fell into wilful Sin, after having been enlightened by Baptism, was lost irrecoverably; that no second Repentance was allowed him; and that nothing remained for him, but a certain fearful looking-for of Judgment. Some misunderstood Passages of Scripture gave Occasion to this Heresy, which was vehemently condemned by the Christian Church, as destructive of all true Christian Religion. Now they who make this Excuse for absenting from the Lord's Supper, are guilty, I say, of this Heresy. But in Answer to the Excuse itself, let us observe,

First, That it is no where supposed in Scripture, that, after having received the holy Sacrament, we should be free from all the Weaknesses and Infirmities of human Nature, nor consequently from the Sins which flow from them. We are still weak, frail, fallible Men,

Men, as well after as before the Sacrament.

But,

Secondly. Nor is Repentance any where denied, even to those who, after having received the Sacrament, fall into wilful Sins, provided always that those wilful Sins be not continued in, but sincerely repented of, and forsaken. On the contrary, it seems to have been one Design of the Institution of this Sacrament, to be a standing Method of renewing our Repentance, and of making our Peace with God.

Thirdly. It is indisputably true, that after having received the holy Sacrament, and therein made solemn Vows and Resolutions of Obedience: It is true (I say) that after this, every Sin is attended with new Guilt. But then it is as true, that the Guilt of our after Transgressions is aggravated by every Act of Religion, as well as by the Sacrament. Every Prayer for Grace increases the Guilt of resisting it: Every Act of Sorrow, every Vow of Amendment, every Repentance, gives a new and peculiar Malignity to every Transgression afterwards. But is this a Reason why we should forbear our Duty in these Points? If not, why in the Sacrament?

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As the Sacrament is the highest Ordinance of Christianity, Disobedience, after having partaken in it, is certainly attended with peculiar aggravating Circumstances. Our Vows are here more positive and solemn, and a Violation of such must be the greatest Perjury. We should therefore take a peculiar Care, and look well to our Ways, as before, so also, after having received the holy Sacrament. Was not this required of us, the Sacrament would not answer the great End of its Institution, which was, to promote the Practice of Righteousness and Virtue. The Necessity therefore of Perseverance in Virtue after the holy Sacrament, instead of being an Excuse for neglecting it, is a Reason for frequenting it.

Thus have I laid before you the Necessity of a frequent Participation of the Lord's Supper, and the several frivolous and wicked Excuses that are pleaded for the Neglect of it.

We have seen the several Ends and Uses of the Institution. But if these cannot influence us, the Command of God must however be obeyed without Reserve.

And as for the Excuses, the true Cause of the general Neglect of this Ordinance (what-ever

ever plausible Pretences may be invented) is at Bottom only this, that Men are resolved not to part with their Vices; that they are unwilling to enter upon such a State of Holiness and Virtue, as they know that sacred Ordinance requires. Were we well affected to Religion and Virtue, all Impediments would soon be overcome, all Difficulties vanish.

Let us therefore seriously reflect on our indispensable Duty in this Point, and not deceive ourselves with vain Words: For nothing can be more manifest, than that we are obliged both to come, and to come prepared, to the holy Sacrament; and that he who receives not at all, and he who receives unworthily, are both without Excuse.

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S E R M O N X I I .

The Necessity of a steady Obedience.



St. MATTH. x. 22.

— *He that endureth to the End,
shall be saved.*



T was necessary that the Minds of the first Christians should be, in a more especial Manner, fortified against those extraordinary Evils, which a steady Adherence to their Profession was to expose them to. And according

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dingly we find our blessed Saviour often forewarning his Disciples of the Calamities which the Profession of his Religion would bring upon them. "Behold, I have told you before," says he. And in the Text he encourages them to a final Perseverance in their Religion, notwithstanding all the Tribulations and Distresses which may on that Account be their Portion. "He that endureth to the End, shall be saved." He that continues stedfast and unmoveable in the Profession of his Religion, and is faithful unto Death, shall be hereafter rewarded with a Crown of Life; and by thus hating his Life in this World, he shall keep it unto Life eternal.

It is true, the Profession of Christianity does not at present expose us to such terrible Calamities as were the Portion of our Fore-runners in the Faith. But yet, if we reflect upon the many and great Difficulties we have still to struggle with, upon the continual War in our Members warring against the Law of our Minds, we can never think an Exhortation to Stedfastness and Perseverance in Virtue unseasonable or impertinent.

It is therefore my Design in this Discourse to press you to a steady Course of Virtue; to

a final Perseverance in your Duty, by shewing you the indispensable Necessity of such Perseverance, if we would have a Title to the Rewards of good and faithful Servants; for he, and he only, that endureth to the End, shall be saved: He only that perseveres in a steady and uniform Course of Virtue to his Life's End, shall be rewarded with the Victor's Crown.

Now Perseverance in Righteousness is required by the very Notion of Religion, with which all Wavering and Unsteadiness is inconsistent. St. *James* tells us, that “who-
“soever keepeth the whole Law, and yet of-
“fends but in one Point, is guilty of all:
“For he that said, Do not commit Adultery,
“said also, Do not kill. Now though we
“commit no Adultery, yet if we kill, we
“are become Transgressors of the Law.”
As if he had said, Whosoever keeps every Precept of the Law but one, and indulges himself in that one single Sin, is reputed in the Sight of God a Transgressor of the whole Law; because he offends against that Authority by which the whole is established: For it is the same Person that enjoins all the Branches of the Law: Every Precept and

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every Prohibition has the same Authority to enforce it: An habitual Breach therefore of any one Commandment is a plain Contempt of that Authority of the Lawgiver, and consequently the habitual Offender in but one Point is justly reputed a Transgressor of the whole.

Now this same Way of Reasoning will hold good with regard to a temporary Obedience: It is equally applicable to his Case, who is at certain Times and Seasons most exactly careful to perform the whole Will of God, but at others as perfectly negligent and remiss; who at certain Times puts the greatest Constraint upon his Inclinations, and at others, gives them the greatest Loose; who at set Seasons is sober, regular, and devout; punctual in his Attendance on the Sanctuary; full of Sorrow for his Offences, and of Resolutions of Amendment; but when once these Seasons are over, imagines his Religion is over too; returns, as it were, with a good Conscience, to his former Iniquities, and thinks no more of his pious Resolutions till the next solemn Festival puts him in Mind of them. The Reasoning of St. *James* is (I say) applicable to his Case: For whosoever keeps
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the whole Law To-day, and transgresses it To-morrow, is justly reputed a continued Transgressor of it all. The Breach of the Law at one Time implies as great a Contempt of the Lawgiver's Authority, which obliges at all Times, as the Transgression of one Precept does of the same Authority which establishes them all. He that said, Do not kill To-day, said also, Do not kill To-morrow. He that said, Be sober, be vigilant, be religious and devout To-day, said also, Continue that Sobriety, that Vigilance, that Religion and Devotion, to the End of your Lives. He that said, reverence and attend upon my Sanctuary and my Ordinances at set and solemn Times, said also, I expect your Reverence and Attendance likewise on all proper and suitable Occasions. The same Person, the same Authority, requires our Obedience at all Times; a constant, uniform Obedience: And therefore a transient, temporary Obedience, is a manifest Contempt of the Person and Authority of the Lawgiver. A true Sense of Religion would therefore oblige us to have an equal Respect to all the Commandments of God, at all Times and Seasons. It would oblige us to persevere in

a Course of Piety and Virtue, even unto the End; and shew us the Vanity and Hypocrisy of pretending to be religious by Fits and Starts; inasmuch as it argues a Contempt of the divine Authority, with the least Spark of which all Religion is inconsistent.

But further: The Seat of Religion is the Heart. Out of the Heart are the Issues of Life: The whole turns upon the good or evil Disposition of the Heart: All Religion does therefore consist in having an Heart right in the Sight of the Lord; in having a perfect Heart with the Lord our God.

Now this Rectitude, this Religion of the Heart, consists in being perfectly and thoroughly disposed to perform whatever can be discovered to be the Will of God, and to persevere in that Performance unto the End. An Heart thus disposed will love the Lord its God entirely with all its Strength, and with all its Might; and will therefore think every Moment of Life misapplied, which is not spent in his Service. It will think any Thing less than its whole Life, an imperfect Offering; like offering the maimed, or the halt, or the blind. It does not therefore inquire, whether it may safely employ some Time in
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the Service of Sin, if it devotes the Remainder to the Service of God. No! it will not divide Life between God and Mammon: It will not serve two Masters: For it is already so attached to the one, that it despises the other. In a Word, an Heart thus disposed (instead of endeavouring to give no more to God, than what it imagines barely necessary) will think every Thing it can give too little: It will devote its whole Being to its Maker, and still think the Return infinitely short of its Debt; and having done all that Heart can do, will still deem itself an unprofitable Servant, since it has done only what was its Duty to do.

But now the unsteady and unstable Christian cannot thus excel: His Heart is far from being right in the Sight of the Lord: He cannot think of bestowing his whole Life in the Service of its Author: A Share he will freely give him, but all he cannot part with. He will therefore compound with his Maker, and will be sure not to defraud him of his Portion, if the Remainder may be his own: He will divide his Life between God and Mammon, and, if he could, would fain serve these two Masters, so as to please them both.

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But let him not thus deceive himself. God is a jealous God, and will suffer none to divide our Affections with him : He will have all our Hearts, all our Lives, or he will have none of them. If we would be saved by him, we must endure unto the End ; but if we are of them that draw back, his Soul has no Pleasure in us. So inconsistent is Unsteadiness with the Notion of Religion, that the unsteady and unstable must not think of receiving any Thing of the Lord. Religion teaches us that we can never do enough ; that our whole Life is infinitely too short for the Service of Him to whom we owe it all : While the unsteady Person, who would do as little as he could, does thence demonstrate, that he does not love the Lord his God with all his Heart.

Perseverance is therefore required by the very Notion of Religion ; but if so, it is surely much more insisted on by the Christian. The Christian Religion was to fulfil the Religion of Nature, to add both to its Perfection and Authority. It was to exalt us to such Degrees of Perfection, as were neither discoverable nor attainable by the Light or Force of Nature : Its Design is to make us perfect,
even

even as our Father which is in Heaven is perfect. Now Perseverance is the Perfection of Religion, and therefore we may be sure it is much insisted on in the most complete and perfect Institution of Religion. And if we consult that Religion upon this Head, we shall find it every where inculcated in the strongest Terms. Thus are we commanded to hold fast the Profession of our Faith, without wavering;—to continue in the Faith grounded and settled, and not to be moved away from the Hope of the Gospel;—not to fall from our stedfastness,—but to hold the Beginning of our Confidence stedfast unto the End,—and not to be weary in well-doing.—“No Man putting his Hand to the Plough, “and looking back (says our Saviour) is fit “for the Kingdom of God.”—And in the Text he tells us, that he only that endureth unto the End shall be saved.

Since then Perseverance in Virtue is so indispensibly required by the very Notion of Religion, and is yet more especially necessary to the Attainment of that Perfection after which Christians are to aspire; how is it possible that those who have any Knowledge either of natural or revealed Religion, should
yet

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yet be so inconstant in their religious Affairs, as we find the Bulk of Mankind to be? The true Reason is, a mistaken Notion of Repentance.

Repentance is generally thought a Work that may be soon dispatched; a Work that may be begun and finished a Week before a Sacrament, or upon a Sick-bed. It is thought to consist of nothing but a few Sighs and Tears, of some forced and extorted Sorrow, and of some faint and languid Resolutions of Amendment. This indeed is a Work that may be soon over; but this is not Repentance: Repentance (*μετανοια*) in the Original signifies a Change of Mind, of Temper, of Disposition; and therefore the Scriptures, when they bid us repent, tell us, that to repent, is to be converted; to be turned about, to be changed into Natures quite different from what we were before. "Repent
"and be converted, that your Sins may be
"blotted out." They call Repentance also Regeneration, and the Penitent a new Man. "Put off (says the Apostle) concerning your
"former Conversation the old Man, and put
"on the new Man, which after God is created in Righteousness and true Holiness."

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And the Prophet exhorts us to cast away from us all our Transgressions, and to make us a new Heart and a new Spirit. Such is the Change true Repentance is to work in us, that we are no longer to be the same Men: We are no longer to have the same Temper, Disposition, or Inclinations: We are no longer to have the same Friends or Enemies: The Objects of our present Hatred are to become the Objects of our most ardent Love: And what were our Bosom-friends, the beloved of our Souls before, we are now to drive far from us, and to look upon them with the utmost Abhorrence and Detestation. If we repent, we must bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance: We must shew the Sincerity of our Repentance by our Reformation and Amendment. If we be truly sorry for our past Offences, we cannot repeat them for the future, because we cannot designedly again involve ourselves in Sorrow. If we hate ourselves for our Ingratitude to our great Benefactor, a Sense of Generosity will make us more grateful for the future; and Resolutions made upon Deliberation, and in good Earnest, will be kept. If therefore our Sighs and Tears flow from the Heart;
if

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if our Sorrow does in Truth arise from a deep Sense of the Heinousness of Sin; and if, upon this Conviction, we are in earnest, determined and resolved to amend; then the Consequence of this will be real and sincere Reformation. Examination, Confession, Sorrow, and good Resolutions, are not Repentance. Repentance is actual Reformation and Amendment. These are indeed necessary Steps to prepare us for Repentance, but not Repentance itself: And because they are necessary Steps to Repentance, that is the Reason God requires them at our Hands. He requires Examination, that we may be able to pass a Judgment upon our Conduct; Confession, that we may be sensible of our Guilt; Sorrow for our past Offences, that for the future we may avoid what at present gives us so much Pain; and Vows and Purposes of Reformation, that we may in Truth become reformed. He is a kind and beneficent Being, and therefore can have no Pleasure in the Pain and Sorrow of his Creatures, as such. No! he is pleased with these Things only because they are good for us; because they are necessary to work in us that Reformation, without which we shall be ruined.

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He has no other Aim, than to make us Partakers of his Happiness; but before we can be so, we must first be Partakers of his Holiness. And these are the Means he makes Use of to that End; and these, if rightly and sincerely performed, will answer his gracious Purpose, which is nothing else, than, in order to our own Happiness, to make us really and substantially good and virtuous, and to purify unto himself a peculiar People, zealous of good Works.

Repentance is, therefore, not a transient Act: It is real Reformation and Perseverance for the future. It is not a Duty to be exercised on solemn Occasions only, and then securely to be laid aside. No! it is the Business of our Lives. He only that endureth unto the End, shall be saved.

The Lives of most Men are in Truth neither wholly good, nor wholly evil: They pass them in a constant Course of sinning and repenting, of repenting and sinning again. The Returns of the solemn Festivals call them to think of their Duty; for were it not for these Festivals, the very Appearance of Religion would be worn off. At these Times then they are particularly circumspect in their

Conduct, and keep their Thoughts, Words, and Deeds, with all Diligence: They are then extremely sorry for their past Offences, and abhor themselves for their Ingratitude: Their Purposes of Amendment are very full and resolved; and the Church and Sacrament (neglected the whole Year before) are now most devoutly attended.—Excellent Signs of Reformation! But are they in Truth reformed? Their Goodness is as the Morning Cloud, and as the early Dew, it passeth away: Their Religion is over with the Solemnity: They have now made up their Accounts, and may therefore safely begin a new Reckoning: They have, they think, discharged their Duty very well for the present Opportunity; and therefore imagine, that, till the next occurs, all the Time is their own: They return with the Dog to his Vomit, and with the Sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the Mire: Their Sorrow before the Festival is turned into Gladness, too often into Riot and Excess: The Church and Sacrament are left desolate till the Return of the Season, and all their Vows and Purposes of Amendment forgotten, like a dead Man out of Mind.

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This is in Truth the Case of too many. Why else are our Places of public Worship so crowded on some Occasions, and on a sudden so utterly forsaken? It is Matter of Joy to a serious Christian, to see the great Festivals of his Religion solemnized by such a Multitude that keep Holyday. But his Joy is soon turned into Heaviness, when he sees all this Devotion vanish with the Solemnity. It is, no doubt of it, our bounden Duty, on great and solemn Occasions, to be in a more particular Manner prepared as a Bride adorned for her Husband. It is meet and right that we should, on some Occasions more especially, search narrowly into our Conduct; see wherein we have failed since our last Examination, or what Progress we have made in Virtue. In a Word, it is necessary, that on some Occasions we should more solemnly renew our Repentance: And for this Work, no Times are so proper as the great Festivals of the Church. (And indeed so moving, so affecting are these Occasions, so fraught with every Thing that can work upon an ingenuous Temper, that they who are not influenced by them, so as to call their

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Ways to Remembrance, and to reflect a little upon the great Things that have been done for them, seem to be given over to a reprobate Mind; and are like the deaf Adder, which stoppeth her Ears, and refuseth to hear the Voice of the Charmer, charm he never so wisely). But because on some Occasions our Souls are to be more particularly adorned, are they therefore at all other Times utterly to be neglected? Are we never to commemorate the Death and Passion of our Redeemer, but on the Day in which he was born, or in which he died for us? Because on some Occasions our Ways are to be more carefully called to Remembrance, are we therefore to take no Heed to them all the rest of our Lives? And are our pious Vows and Resolutions of Amendment made only for a particular Occasion? Be not deceived: The sole End of all these Things is Reformation, a sincere and steady Amendment. If they do not bring forth this Fruit, to no Purpose is the Multitude of your Sacrifices; to no Purpose your Celebration of the new Moons and appointed Feasts; to no Purpose your partial Examinations, your hypocritical Sorrows

Sorrows and abortive Resolutions. Would we approve ourselves in the Sight of that God to whose Eye all Things are naked and open; who is a Searcher of the Hearts and Reins, and therefore cannot be imposed upon by outward Shew and Appearance, but looks through every Disguise: Would we (I say) approve ourselves in his Sight, let us examine narrowly into the Disposition of our Hearts: Let us be particularly careful that all be right there: And if our Hearts be perfect, a steady, uniform, universal Obedience (as far as human Infirmary will permit) will quickly follow: We shall then be convinced, that it is our Duty to set the Lord always before us; to have Respect unto all his Commandments at all Times and Seasons; to keep a constant and perpetual Watch over all our Actions; to shew our Reverence to the Sanctuary by our constant Attendance on it; and to manifest our Gratitude for the Benefits of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, by our being a constant Partaker of it, whenever it is administered in that Congregation of which we are Members; and upon the great and solemn Festivals of our most holy Religion;

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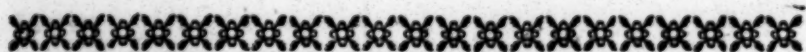
Festivals admirably calculated to awaken and rouse us into a Sense of our Duty, and to bring to our Remembrance every Circumstance of that great Salvation which is offered and held out to us. On these Occasions (I say) we should think ourselves doubly obliged to exert all our Faculties in the Service of our great Benefactor: And when the Solemnity is over (were our Hearts perfect) we should not think ourselves at Liberty to lay aside our Gratitude and Devotion; but, on the contrary, we should think it our Duty to persevere; to endure unto the End; to be careful not to forget to pay what we had vowed; not to let all our Tears, and Sorrows, and Resolutions, to be thrown away; not (as the Scriptures express it) to lose those Things that we had wrought, but to be faithful unto Death, that we may receive a full Reward. In a Word, we should be exceeding fearful of falling from our Stedfastness, lest our latter End should be worse than our Beginning. We should be fearful of sinning any more, lest a worst Thing come upon us.

S E R M O N



S E R M O N XIII.

Of the necessary Qualifications of successful Prayer.



St. JAMES iv. 3.

*Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask
amiss.*



AMONG the many and various Duties which have the great God for their direct and immediate Object, in the foremost Rank is that of Prayer; Prayer, of all others surely the most reasonable, the most necessary, the most delightful, and the most honourable.

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The most reasonable : Who can doubt it, that reflects on the Perfections of the Deity, and the Imperfections of Humanity: On the Power, the Wisdom, and the Goodness of God, on the one Hand ; and the Impotence, the Ignorance, and the Wick- edness of Man, on the other ?

The most necessary : For where else shall we apply ? to whom else shall we go ? The Power, the Knowledge, the Disposition of all created Beings, are unknown. Heaven therefore is the only Quarter to which with Confidence we can look.

The most delightful : For what can be more so, than to meet with Goodness ? What can inspire greater Joy, than for a Person conscious of the extremest Necessity, to be led to a Being infinitely powerful and infinitely gracious ; absolutely capable of removing all its Complaints, and disposed to do it, to such a Degree, as not only to be prevailed on by Importunity, but even to wish for nothing more than Opportunity. —And if to our Supplications be added also a Prayer of Thanksgiving, that is, Expression of Gratitude ; and Expression of Gratitude is Relief to the Soul ; one of the highest

highest Satisfaction a virtuous Mind is capable of.

The most honourable : For can there be greater Honour, than for a low, mean, contemptible Creature, to be admitted to the Presence and Converse of the high Creator; to be permitted to prostrate itself before his Throne; to open and unbosom itself; to enumerate and enlarge upon its Wants; and to be heard not only with *Patience*, but with *Acceptance*; to be answered with *Redress*; to be perpetually receiving fresh Marks of the highest paternal Love and Tendernefs?—The gracious Reception of Petitions is, in temporal Princes, regarded as the highest Honour to the Subject; and is it none in the King of Heaven?

We Christians are said to have our Conversation, our Citizenship, in Heaven; *i. e.* Heaven is our Home, the Country of which we are Denizens, and to which we properly belong. Now Commerce and Correspondence with their proper Country is ever reckoned the highest Comfort and Satisfaction to those whom Necessity compels to sojourn in a strange one; and therefore we should esteem it as our highest Happiness, in this
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our Pilgrimage and Absence from home, to maintain a constant Intercourse with Heaven. But such Intercourse it is Devotion only can carry on.

Devotion, our eternal Happiness depends upon; and therefore Improvement in it should now be our Study and Employment: For there can be no Heaven but to the Heavenly-minded; no Relish for those Rivers of Pleasures, which flow even at the right Hand of God, but to those whose Taste is familiarized to those smaller Streams which from thence are derived upon this lower World.

Shall then Devotion be considered under the burthensome Notion of *Duty*? Is it not much more properly to be viewed in the brighter Light of Privilege? A Privilege most certainly it is, and a very high one. But then it must be remembered, that it is a Privilege, the Advantages of which are not thrown out in common, nor prostituted by being indiscriminately tendered. No! it is granted upon Terms; to those only who are so and so qualified and disposed.

And it shall be the Business of this Discourse to shew you what those Qualifications
and

and Dispositions are, which are requisite to render this Duty, or this Privilege of Prayer, acceptable to God, and beneficial to ourselves.

Among the several Objections which are made to the Reasonableness of Prayer in general, its Unsuccessfulness is one: For it is argued, that to what Purpose is Prayer, when we see not those who are constant in the Practice of it, in a better Condition than other Men? Does the Almighty appear to make any Difference between him that serveth him, and him that serveth him not? Do they, and they only, enjoy the divine Favours, who are constant and earnest in asking them? On the contrary, do we not see, that they are equally plagued with other Men? Is not the devout Petitioner of Heaven often as far from the Happiness he prays for, as he who has not God in all his Thoughts? Does he who is languishing under Pain and Sicknes of Body, find immediate Relief upon his Prayer? Are the hungry fed, or the naked cloathed, upon their Prayer? Does Misery, of what Kind soever, fly before it, and is Happiness its never-failing Consequence? No! Experience,

rience, it is said, evinces the contrary. Since then we may pray both without ceasing and without Effect, it is profanely asked, What is the Almighty, that we should serve him, and what Profit shall we have if we pray unto him?

Now to this Objection the Apostle gives a full Answer in the Words of the Text: "Ye ask (says he) and receive not, because ye ask amiss." Your Prayers are unsuccessful; and the Reason why they are so, is because they are not rightly offered: "Ye ask amiss." There is something wrong either in the Petition or in the Petitioner; some Fault either in the Matter of your Prayers, or in the Manner of offering them, or in the Disposition of the Offerer.

Almighty God has indeed made many and positive Promises of giving good Things to them that ask him: But then all these Promises must be confined to those only who ask in a proper Manner. He has himself set down several Qualifications which he requires in the Petitioner, in order to his being successful. They therefore alone can have any Title to be heard, who are qualified as he directs. Indeed, were there no Conditions expressed,

expressed, yet, in the Nature of the Thing, no Promise of granting to those who ask could be supposed to extend further, than to those who ask properly : For it is well known among Men, that we may ask in such a Manner, as at the same time to affront and offend. Our Manner of praying may therefore be a greater Insult upon the divine Majesty, than our praying at all is an Acknowledgment of his Sovereignty. And for this Reason it is, that the Prayers of the wicked (so far are they from being heard) are declared to be an Abomination in the Sight of the Lord.

The Heathen Philosophers (some of them at least) appear to have been very sensible of the Difficulty of praying as they ought : We find them bewailing their Ignorance and Inability in this Matter. One of them * carries it even so far as to question, whether it be not better absolutely to forbear praying, than perhaps, by praying improperly, to offend the Deity. He seems to be for deferring the Practice of this Duty, till he should be thoroughly instructed in the proper Manner of discharging it, by some divine Revelation,

* Socrates.

which

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which he expected and wished for. What he wished for, we enjoy. The Cause of Complaint is now taken away: The Ignorance he lamented is removed by the Revelation he hoped for. Christianity has pointed out to us the necessary Qualifications of the Petitioner, in order to his Petitions being an acceptable Service. And what those are, and the Reasonableness of them, I now proceed to lay before you.

And the first and leading Qualification is, an honest and an upright Heart; an Heart thoroughly disposed to perform the whole Will of God; an Heart studious to please that Being to whom it offers its Petitions. It must have no Fellowship with the Works of Darkness, must indulge no favourite Passion, nor allow itself in the habitual Practice of any Wickedness or Vice. It must, on the contrary, hunger and thirst after Righteousness. Its great and constant Design must be to do the Will of that God, to whose Service it must be devoted, absolutely and without Reserve.

That an Heart thus disposed is indispensibly necessary in order to the Success of our Prayers, the holy Scriptures do abundantly testify.

testify. "If I regard Iniquity in my Heart," says holy *David*, "the Lord will not hear me;" *i. e.* if my Heart is wicked, my Prayers are useless. And thus saith the Lord by the Mouth of *Isaiab*, "When ye spread out your Hands, I will hide mine Eyes; yea, when ye make many Prayers, I will not hear; your Hands are full of Blood;" *i. e.* while there is Iniquity in your Hands, your Prayers are fruitless. The Iniquity of the Heart will render the most precious Oblations unacceptable, the sweetest Incense abominable. The true Value of the Sacrifice consists in the Righteousness of the Offerer. Without this, the Almighty declares himself unable to bear the Celebration of new Moons and Sabbaths: Without this, the appointed Feasts, and the calling of Assemblies, he cannot away with: Without this, vain are Oblations; Incense, loathsome. Would we have these acceptable, we must wash and make us clean; we must put away the Evil of our Doings; we must cease to do Evil, and learn to do well. From this Passage of the Prophet we may learn, that the Virtue of every Act of Religion depends upon the Goodness of our Hearts, and that

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that the least Sifulness there, is a Leaven, which will leaven the whole Lump, which will diffuse itself through all our religious Exercises, and tincture every one of them with its Malignity.

Again : The wise Man tells us, that “ he
“ that turneth his Ear from hearing the Law,
“ even his Prayer shall be Abomination to
“ the Lord ; but the Prayer of the Upright
“ is his Delight.” St. *Paul* directs us to lift
up holy Hands, and St. *James* informs us,
that it is only the fervent Prayer of the right-
eous Man which availeth much ; and St. *John*
says, “ Whatsoever we ask of God, we receive
“ of him, because we keep his Command-
“ ments, and do those Things which are
“ pleasing in his Sight.

The doing the Will of God, and keeping
his Commandments, must be the Foundation
of our Hopes. Upon this depends the Suc-
cess of our Petitions. Nor indeed could we
reasonably think it to be otherwise : For the
Prayer of the wicked is the greatest Mockery
of, and highest Insult upon, the divine Ma-
jesty, that can be imagined. It is to affront
and beg at the same Time : It is to acknow-
ledge the divine Sovereignty in Words, but

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to deny it in Fact. The exact Picture of the Prayers of the wicked, is the Behaviour of those *Jews*, who bowed the Knee before, and hailed him as their King, at the same time that they were loading him with the highest Insults and Indignities.—The Prayers of Sinners are the Prayers of Rebels; and if the latter cannot expect to be heard by their Prince, infinitely less Reason surely have the former to hope for that Favour from their God; inasmuch as there is no Rebellion like to that of a Creature against its Creator.

Wo, therefore, unto those Hypocrites, who devour Widows Houses; who commit all Iniquity with Greediness, and hope to atone for these Enormities by long, frequent Prayers. The very Prayer of such Men is itself a Sin, and therefore surely can have no Claim to be heard. No! the acceptable, and consequently the successful Prayer, must be pure; and to make that pure, the Heart and Hands of the Offerer must be so too.

Thus necessary to the Acceptance of our Prayers is an Heart well affected to Goodness in general. That is indeed the only true Foundation for all religious Exercises.—Yet there are nevertheless some Particulars, which

seem more nearly related to Prayer, and to have a closer Connection with the due Performance of it.—And among these, in the first place, are Humility and Submission.

Humility and Submission are of all Things most becoming in Petitioners. A Favour must not be asked in the same Manner that we would demand a Right. In the one Case, we beg; in the other, we claim: And great surely should be the Difference between the Language and Behaviour of a Beggar and a Claimer. The Petitioner is dependent upon him, from whom he asks; and Humility and Submission, we know, are proper and necessary Qualifications in a Dependent.

If then Humility be so necessary an Ingredient in all Petitions offered by one Man to another, that the Want of it alone shall be itself a sufficient Reason to reject them; how much more reasonable must it be, that the profoundest Humility should accompany all our Addresses to the Throne of Heaven? and how much more necessary must we think it to our Success there? A Sense of the natural Equality of Men, of their common Wants and Infirmities, and of the Need which they all in their Turns have of the Help

Help and Assistance of one another, should in a good Measure take off from the Reasonableness and Necessity of Humility, in this kind of Intercourse between Man and Man.

But in our Addresses to Heaven, the Being with whom we have to do is our Sovereign Lord, by the strongest of Titles, Creation: And so infinite is the Distance between a Creature and its Creator, that it should seem, as if any Addresses, though offered in the humblest and the lowliest Manner possible, were too great a Familiarity.

Again: One Man may ask of another, with some kind of Confidence; because, such are the common Wants and Infirmities of Humanity, that he who is now petitioned may perhaps in his Turn become the Petitioner, and so the Favour may be requited. But, can a Man be profitable to his Maker? No, certainly: Nothing that a Creature can do can extend to, or affect its Creator. The Almighty is all-sufficient to his own Happiness, and therefore can have no Motive to grant our Requests, but his own innate Beneficence.

Add to the Considerations of the divine Majesty and All-sufficiency, the Unworthiness

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of his Petitioners, and this will not a little strengthen the Argument for Humility. We are not only Creatures, but sinful Creatures; not only Subjects, but Rebels. A Creature conscious of having in all Points done the Will of its Creator, might have, for some kind of Confidence, whatever Claim a good Subject may have to the Favour of his Prince. Yet this avails us nothing, who are conscious of Transgressions, as the Sands upon the Sea Shore, innumerable. Whatever Confidence Innocence might inspire us with, a Sense of Guilt will check our rising Thoughts, and throw us back into the utmost and deepest Confusion, *Joel* ii. 12. It is for this that our Heart is faint. We may observe how this influenced the holy Men of old in their Manner of praying. "To us (says *Daniel*) "O Lord, belongeth Confusion of Face, because we have sinned against thee." And thus *Ezra*: "We are ashamed and blush, "to lift up our Eyes to Thee our God; for "our Iniquities are increased over our Head, "and our Trespas is grown up unto the "Heavens." Holy *David* tells us, that God forgetteth not the Cry of the humble; and
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the wise Son of *Sirach*, that the Prayer of the humble pierceth the Clouds.

But our Disposition must not only be humble, but likewise resigned and submissive. We must submit our Will to the divine : We must not be apt to murmur and repine, if our Requests are not literally and punctually answered ; but we must be content and easy with a Denial, and perfectly resigned under all the Dispensations of Providence, however contrary they may be to our warmest Inclinations and most earnest Prayers.

Now the Reasonableness of having this Temper of Mind, at once appears from the Consideration of the Perfection of the divine Nature, and the Infirmities of the human. God is all-wise, all-powerful, and all-good : He therefore knows what is best for us, and has both Power and Inclination to bestow it on us. Man is an ignorant Creature, which often mistakes its true Interest : He is weak-fighted, and therefore cannot always rightly distinguish between Good and Evil : His Palate is vitiated, and therefore he often takes bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.

The Objects of Prayer are of two Kinds ; either spiritual or temporal Goods. Of the

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first Sort are Pardon of Sin, the Grace of God, and everlasting Happiness in the World to come. Now these being Goods of a fixed and immutable Nature; these being good in all Circumstances and Conditions, for these we may and should pray without Limitation or Reserve; we can never mistake our true Interest in praying for these: Nor is it possible to sit easy and contented under a Denial of them. Here we can never exceed in Fervency and Importunity; nor can we ever be too solicitous to have our Requests of this Nature punctually and literally fulfilled.

But with regard to the other Objects of our Prayers, *viz.* temporal Goods, the Case is quite otherwise: For these not being absolutely and universally good, they may very often be attended with very dismal and fatal Consequences. These are Things of a gay and flattering Outside, and with this we are taken, never considering the Evil that may accompany them. We may therefore pray for Evil under the Disguise of Good: We may pray for Ruin under the Appearance of Happiness; for Serpents and Scorpions, which would sting and destroy us, when we mean
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the Conveniencies and Comforts of Life, to sustain and rejoice us.

Since then, with regard to temporal Goods, we know not what to pray for, how reasonable is it that we should, with the most absolute Resignation and Submission, commit our Affairs to Him, who cannot be mistaken in our true Interest ! God sees through all the Consequences of Things, and may therefore refuse us a present Enjoyment, to prevent our suffering a greater Misery hereafter. He is also intimately acquainted with our Hearts and Dispositions : He knows therefore how temporal Happiness would affect us ; and may therefore keep us from the Enjoyment of it, because he would keep us out of Temptation. One, perhaps, petitions for Length of Days, but God denies his Request, because he will take away his faithful Servant from the Evil to come. Another has set his Heart on Riches, and is Day and Night importuning Heaven for the Possession of them ; but God rejects his Prayer, because he wants to consume them upon his Lusts. The Man of middle State, who makes a virtuous and a generous Use of the moderate Fortune he at present enjoys, but who is yet foolish

enough to pray for the Increase of it, is happily denied, because its Increase would make him become not more charitable, but more covetous, and so his present Virtue might lose its Reward. Another aspires after Honour and Grandeur; but the Height perhaps would turn his Head; and God, who knows that it would do so, in Pity with-holds him from the Precipice. In a Word, God Almighty deals with us in these Affairs, as a tender Parent with his Children. We, like froward Children, are ever desiring what is hurtful to us: He, like an indulgent Parent, who knows and consults our true Interest, denies our Requests out of pure Love and Compassion. There is no Man who makes any Reflection upon what happens to him in Life, but, I believe, will confess, that the Denial of his Prayers has some Time or other become Matter of his Praise: He is sensible that he has wished and prayed for what he afterward found would have been prejudicial to him, had he obtained it: He therefore rejoices at the *happy Disappointment*, and with a truly grateful Heart, thank his God for the *gracious Refusal*.

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It is therefore infinitely reasonable that we should in every Thing give Thanks ; that is, that we should not only be contented under, but even thankful for, all the divine Dispensations, however opposite they may be to our present Wishes and Desires ; as being fully satisfied, that our present Condition, whatever it is, is certainly and absolutely the best for us, because it is the Direction of infinite Wisdom, Power, and Goodness. All our Requests then for temporal Goods should be conditional : They should all be offered up with this Limitation, either expressed or implied, if God in his Wisdom and Goodness shall see what we ask to be fit and expedient for us.

Thus reasonable are Resignation and Submission in Prayer, with regard to ourselves ; and that they are necessary Qualifications in order to the Success of our Petitions, we cannot doubt, when we consider, that such Dispositions are an Acknowledgment of the divine Sovereignty and Perfections, and a casting of all our Care upon Him, who careth for us. And to shew us the Necessity of this Temper of Mind, our blessed Saviour has taught us to pray, that “ God’s Will may be done in
“ Earth,

“ Earth, as it is in Heaven ;” and has likewise left us in himself the most glorious Example of it : For when in his Agony he prayed, that, if possible, the bitter Cup might pass from him, these were his Restrictions ;
“ Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt ; not my Will, but Thine be done.”
If this Cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy Will be done.





S E R M O N XIV.

Of the necessary Qualifications of successful Prayer.



St. JAMES iv. 3.

*Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask
amiss.*

THE Reasonableness, the Necessity,
the Pleasure, the Honour, of the
great Duty of Prayer, are all of
them extremely obvious and striking; the in-
finite Majesty and Perfection of the Deity on
one hand, and the Meanness and Imperfection
of Humanity on the other, being irresistible.
Devotion

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Devotion is indeed a Matter both of such high Honour and Benefit, that it should not so much be considered under the burthen-some Notion of Duty, as in the brighter Light of Privilege.—A Privilege undoubtedly it is; and of such a Nature also, that the fuller Use and Enjoyment of it is to constitute our eternal Happiness hereafter; and therefore the Use and Exercise of it *now*, must be necessary in a double View; both as an *Ingredient* in our *present* Happiness, and as a *Qualification* for our *future*.

But then it is to be remembered, that this is a Privilege not thrown out in common; not prostituted by being indiscriminately tendered. No! the Benefits of it are granted upon Terms; to those only who are so and so qualified and disposed. And therefore, in a former Discourse upon these Words, I proposed to lay before you what those Qualifications and Dispositions were, which were requisite to render this *Duty*, or *this Privilege* of Prayer, *acceptable to God*, and *beneficial to ourselves*.

The Apostle, in the Text, plainly supposes that there are such Dispositions and Qualifications; and assigns the Want of them as
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the Reason of (what is principally objected to) the Unsuccessfulness of the Duty.—“ Ye ask, “ and receive not, because ye ask amiss.”— There is something wrong, either in the Petition or in the Petitioner ; some Fault, either in the Prayer or in the Manner of offering it, or in the Disposition of the Offerer.

No Promise of granting Petitions can indeed, in the Nature of the Thing, be supposed to extend farther than to those who present them properly : And when the Petition is made to Heaven, what seems, in the first place, proper and necessary, what is indeed the leading Qualification, in the Petitioner, is a pure, an honest, and an upright Heart ; an Heart cleansed from all Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, and thoroughly disposed to perform the whole Will of God ; studious and solicitous to please that Being, to whose Service it must be devoted, without Restriction or Reserve.

God, we know, is a Being of infinite Holiness ; of purer Eyes than even so much as to look upon Iniquity ; at least, without Abhorrence : And therefore it cannot be supposed, but that the Prayer of the Wicked must be an Abomination to him.—Surely he will

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will turn away his Ear from hearing their Prayer, and shut up his Loving-kindness in Displeasure.—“ Friend, how camest thou in
“ hither, not having on a Wedding-gar-
“ ment ? ” — Such the mildest Expostulation that wicked Petitioners can expect. And as they have nothing to say in Defence of themselves, as they are *speechless* on the Occasion, they cannot object to their Fate ; — to be cast out into utter Darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth. — For bare Denial and Disappointment can by no means be supposed all that they are to meet with ; for Prayer is by Wickedness converted into Sin ; Iniquity, fixed and continued in, gives it a positive Guilt ; and therefore entitles it to a positive Punishment.

For the Prayer of the obdurate Sinner is an Act of Hypocrisy and Insolence ; as implying that we doubted either of God’s Knowledge, or Aversion to our Iniquities.

Humility and Submission were the next Qualifications mentioned. A Favour must not be asked in the same Manner we demand a Right. A Petitioner is dependent upon the petitioned, and Humility and Submission unquestionably necessary in a Dependent.

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But how is that Necessity heightened, when we consider with whom in this Case we have to do!—The Possessor of Heaven and Earth; —the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth Eternity.

And to the Height of the divine Majesty, add the humbling, the abasing Thought of our own Unworthiness; add, that we are Sinners, that we are Rebels; and therefore, instead of being upheld by the supporting Hand of Innocence, we are struck back by the irresistible Force of Guilt.

Submission and Resignation are also necessary upon another Account; and that is, our own Ignorance, even our Ignorance of what is good for us. We know not what to pray for as we ought: We often pray for Serpents and Scorpions, which would sting and destroy us, when we mean the Necessaries and Comforts of Life, to sustain and rejoice us. Every Man of any Reflection will readily confess this Truth; for it cannot be, but, in the Occurrences of his Life, he must have observed, that he has often wished for what was hurtful and pernicious; that the Subject of his most fervent Addresses to Heaven, would, if obtained, have been his Ruin:
And

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And therefore the Denial of his Prayers becomes an *Article* in his *Praises*.

Things indeed of a spiritual Nature, being of fixed and invariable Excellence and Utility, such as Pardon of Sin, the Grace of God, and the Salvation of our Souls, are and should be the Subjects of our most importunate Prayers, without any Limitations or Restrictions. But temporal Petitions (as we find we are so often mistaken in them) should ever have annexed to them the Condition of God's knowing them to be good for us.

"Not my Will, but thine be done," was our great Master's Prayer, even when, being in an Agony, he prayed more earnestly. And shall we after that presume to set up our own Will?

To rejoice in Tribulations, was, after this Example, the distinguished Character of his first Followers.—Be it ours, in these much less fiery Trials, *Disappointments of our Wishes*, in every thing to give Thanks.

Another Requisite to a successful Prayer is Faith; that is, a firm Trust and Dependence upon God; an unshaken Reliance upon his Power, Wisdom, Goodness, and Veracity; a full Belief that God knows what we want,

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is able and disposed to bestow it on us, and likewise that he will most certainly make good what his Veracity is engaged for : And what his Veracity is engaged for is, not always literally to grant what we pray for (for this we have seen may be often destructive to us) but it is, if we are rightly qualified, to do what is best for us ; either to grant our Petitions, or, if that cannot be, however, to take care of us in the Way which to infinite Wisdom and Goodness shall seem most expedient.

The holy Scriptures do greatly insist on this Faith, as a Qualification necessary in order to the Success of our Prayers. Thus he who would pray successfully, must lift up holy Hands, without Wrath and *Doubting* : We must ask in Faith nothing wavering, and draw near in full Assurance of Faith. The Waverer must not think to receive any thing of the Lord ; but whatsoever Things we desire when we pray, if we believe that we receive them, we shall have them.

Nor indeed can we wonder that this Faith is made so necessary to our Success : For who should we think so likely to succeed in his Petitions, as he who has a firm Trust and Reliance upon the Wisdom, Power, Good-

ness, and Truth of Him to whom he offers them.

Another Requisite to a successful Prayer is Charity. The successful Petitioner must be of a kind and benevolent Disposition: He must be so far from cherishing Rancour and Malice in his Heart, that he must breathe nothing but Love. Of this his Enemies, as well as Friends, must partake. His Beneficence must be like his, to whom he prays, universal; extending both to the evil and to the good. He is with Joy to embrace every Opportunity of doing Good to Mankind: And however his Power may be confined, yet his Prayers and good Wishes must be unlimited.

How necessary this charitable Temper of Mind is to the Success of our Prayers, our blessed Saviour has most strongly taught us, by making our forgiving our Brother the Condition of our expecting Forgiveness at God's Hand, and by expressly inserting it in the Body of that Prayer which he has left his Followers to be both a Part and Pattern of their Devotions: "Forgive us our Trespases, as we forgive them that trespass against us." Deal thou with us as we do with
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our Brother : If we forgive him, do thou forgive us ; but if we do not forgive him, then do not thou forgive us. Every Time therefore we repeat the Lord's Prayer, without being in perfect Charity with all Men, we pray to God not to forgive us our Sins.

Nor must we think this Forgiveness necessary only when we offer up this Prayer. No ! it is a Condition expressed or implied in every Prayer. For thus says our Saviour, " When ye stand praying, (*i. e.* whenever we pray) " forgive ; that your heavenly Father may also forgive you. The Lord's Prayer is the Model after which all our other Prayers are to be formed. Whatever therefore is the Condition of our Forgiveness in this Prayer, the same must be the Condition, either expressed or implied, in all others.

Again : Our Lord has positively declared, that he will not receive the Prayers of those who are at Enmity, by commanding us to leave our Gift unoffered at his Altar, and to go and first be reconciled, before we presume to make him any Oblation. Thus there seems to be nothing so much insisted on, in order to the Success of our Prayers, as this Charity ; and indeed with the highest Reason : For can

there be any Disposition so proper for, so becoming those who are themselves Petitioners? For who can deserve so well the Favours and Mercies of the Deity, as he who, to the best of his Power, is imitating his Beneficence; who, as far as in him lies, is dealing that Happiness to all around him, which he is begging of Heaven for himself? Who so good a Title to Mercy, as the Merciful? Who to have his own Prayer heard, as he who himself heareth Prayer? Who to be forgiven, as he who forgives?

Fervency and Attention are other Qualifications necessary to a successful Prayer; that is, we must be serious and in earnest when we pray. Indeed, when the Petitioner is in earnest, all Exhortations to Fervency and Attention are needless. When our Wants are great and real, we are eager enough to have them supplied. The cold, unattentive Petitioner, is therefore one of the greatest Contradictions; for he begs for what yet he does not seem desirous to obtain: He therefore, with the highest Propriety, may be said to offer the Sacrifice of Fools; for it is not the moving of the Lips, it is not the prostrate Body, not the lifted-up Hands or Eyes, but the lifting up of the
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the Heart, that is the valuable Oblation; it is the Devotion of the Heart that alone can pierce the Clouds; it is this which takes Heaven, as it were, by Violence. Upon this Fervency and Attention the holy Scriptures lay great Weight. Thus we are commanded to seek God with our whole Desire; to be fervent in Spirit, in serving the Lord. The successful Prayer must not go out of feigned Lips; for the Lord is nigh only those who call upon him in Truth, *i. e.* with Sincerity and Earnestness; for it is only the effectual fervent Prayer which availeth much. When therefore we set about our Devotions, let us endeavour to raise and fix our Attention; let us be awed by the Greatness of the Being we are going to address; let us be sensible of our Wants, and importunate for the Relief of them, lest we incur the terrible Guilt of drawing near to God with our Lips, while our Hearts are far from him.

Perseverance is another necessary Qualification. We must not desist from Prayer, because we do not find we are immediately answered. No! we must ask, till we receive; we must continue knocking till it be opened. Thus the holy Scriptures command

us to continue instant in Prayer, and to watch thereunto with all Perseverance. We are always to pray, and not to faint; and we find by the Parable of the unjust Judge, who was overcome by the importunate Perseverance of his Petitioner, that, in due Time, we shall reap, if we faint not. God indeed is not to be conquered, as it were, by continued Cries, but he is pleased with our Perseverance in Prayer, because it shews the Sincerity and Earnestness of our Petitions, and the Firmness of our Trust and Confidence in him.

Again: It is another Requisite of successful Prayer, that it be offered up in the Name of our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ. He tells us himself, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my Name, I will do it." And again, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my Name, he will give it you." And the Reasonableness of this is manifest: For it is he who has put us into a Capacity of being heard, by purchasing an eternal Redemption for us. It is therefore by him alone that we can come unto the Father: It is by and through him alone, that we have at all Access unto the Throne of Grace. If therefore we would be successful there,

there, we must appear before it, cloathed with his Righteousness, and present our Petitions in his most prevailing Name.

The Soul being thus prepared, if we would not ask amiss, we must take care likewise of the Worship of the Body : For both Soul and Body being created, preserved, and redeemed by Almighty God, both should bear a Part in his Service. It is our reasonable Service to present our Bodies; as well as our Souls, a living Sacrifice ; holy and acceptable unto God. Religion must employ the whole Man. It is true indeed, that bodily Worship profiteth little, profiteth nothing, without that of the Soul ; but that is no Reason why it should not go along with it, and accompany it.

This bodily Worship consisteth in a proper, respectful Behaviour ; in a Behaviour expressive of the inward Piety of the Mind. Indeed, when there is true Devotion in the Heart, an irreverent Carriage of the Body is impossible ; for we naturally throw ourselves into Gestures expressive of our Thoughts ; we fall into them, even without designing it.

We cannot therefore think it to be a Breach of Charity, to believe that there is no true

Sense of Piety and Religion in the Hearts of those, whose Behaviour in the House of Prayer we observe to be light and giddy, or slovenly and irreverent; or in theirs, who can suffer the most solemn Service of their God to be interrupted by their Compliments to their Neighbour.

Once more: Would we have our Prayers successful, we must add to this Worship both of Soul and Body, our own Endeavours. They certainly ask amiss, who ask for Miracles to be wrought in their Favour; and this they do, who depend upon their Prayers without their Endeavours. Such a miraculous Assistance would be destructive of Society, and is therefore unreasonable. On the contrary, the divine Promises of granting our Petitions are designed to encourage our Industry, instead of superseding the Necessity of it. And so we read in Scripture, both that the Blessing of the Lord maketh rich, and that the Hand of the Diligent maketh rich: The Meaning of which Passages is, that our temporal Prosperity is owing to the Blessing of God, not without, but upon our Industry.

With regard to spiritual Good, the Case is just the same; For if we pray for Pardon of Sin,

Sin, we must endeavour to commit it no more. If for the Graces of the Holy Ghost, we must purify our Hearts, to make them fit Temples for his Reception: If for everlasting Happiness hereafter, we must work out our own Salvation with Fear and Trembling, and give all Diligence to make our Calling and Election sure.

Thus have I shewn you what is requisite in the Petitioner, in order to render him successful. And from what has been said, it appears, that it is our own Fault that our Prayers are so often unanswered: "We ask" and receive not, because we ask amiss." For perhaps we harbour some Sin, or indulge some favourite Passion: And if this be the Case, we know that God heareth not Sinners.

We are perhaps not humble and resigned: We cannot then expect to be gratified; for we ourselves never give Ear to an insolent Petitioner.

It may be, our Faith is wavering: We cannot then expect to be relieved by that Power, Wisdom, or Goodness, which we distrust.

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If we are uncharitable, we are proper Objects of Wrath, not of Mercy.

If we want Fervency, Attention, or Perseverance, we voluntarily give up, what we do but *seem* to petition for.

If our Behaviour is indecent and irreverent, such Deportment calls for a Denial.

And, lastly : Idleness must not be encouraged, and therefore the unactive Petitioner cannot be heard.

Who then is there, that, upon the Examination of his Heart, will dare to affirm, that he is in all these several Articles so well qualified, as to be a worthy Petitioner ; and, in consequence of this insolent Opinion, to arraign the divine Veracity for not answering his Prayers ? If there be such an one, there needs no more to confute him than this very Presumption.

To conclude : Let us beware therefore of charging God foolishly, as if he were slack, as some Men count Slackness in granting our Requests. The Fault is in ourselves : “ We ask amiss.” Let us search into our own Hearts, and there we shall see the Cause of our Denial : Let us then remove the Cause ; let us prepare our Hearts aright before him,
and

and then (whatever may become of our particular Requests) we shall in the End undoubtedly experience the Truth of that, his most gracious Promise; "That all Things shall work together for Good, for them that love him."



SERMON

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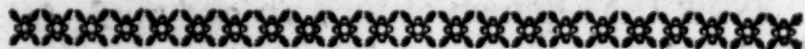


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S E R M O N X V.

*Of the Influence which the
Knowledge of our Death
should have on us.*



ECCLES. ix. 5.

For the living know that they shall die.



HIS admirable Book is one continued Sermon on the Vanity of human Life; on the Insignificance, the Nothingness, of all the Pursuits and Enjoyments of Mortals.—
The Author of it was at once the wisest and
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the wealthiest of Men; and besides, a great and mighty Monarch: So that every thing was within his reach that Wisdom could devise, Riches purchase, or Power command. Nor did his Inclination to enjoy fall short of his Power of enjoying. No! he made the most of the Advantages he was possessed of; he tasted, he pursued every thing to the utmost; and put it thoroughly to the Trial, whether there were any good for the Sons of Men, which they should do under the Heaven, all the Days of their Life; whether there were any real and substantial Happiness in Things on Earth.

Now the Opinion of such an one must, in all Reason, have great Weight. A Person so qualified and so disposed, must needs be thought to give a just Sentence; his Verdict may be depended on. And what is his Verdict? "Vanity of Vanities; all is Vanity." This is the mortifying Result of his Searches; this the repeated Moral of his Book.

Thus we see, that he who had of all others the most Experience in worldly Pleasures, is of all others the fullest and the strongest in asserting their Emptiness and Insignificance. He who knew them best, exposes them most.

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For, not content with a general Charge, he illustrates it by Particulars; proves it by Induction; runs through all the Delights of the Sons of Men; and affirms, that all those various Scenes of Pleasure, he found to be at Bottom but so many various Scenes of Vanity.—In the Passage, of which the Text is a Part, he goes an astonishing Length, by drawing a surprising Parallel; even a Parallel between the Living and the Dead.—What Ground for such a Comparison there can be, we may wonder: For what Comparison can there be between Insensibility and Consciousness? But we are told the Difference is not so great as we imagine; it is but in one Article; it is no more than this, That the Dead know not any thing, and the Living know that they shall die. And is this then all the Distinction? Mighty Advantage! glorious Pre-eminence of Life, to know that that Life shall end!

Pride then is highly becoming Man. Well may he glory in the Capaciousness of his Understanding; with Propriety may he boast of his great and mighty Attainments: He may plume himself upon his well-laid Schemes and wisely-concerted Projects; upon the
Depth

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Depth of his Penetration, and the Acuteness of his Apprehension: He may well, I say, look big upon all this; since notwithstanding, all that he knows, more than the Dead, is, that he himself shall die likewise.

After this, Man need not fear any new Mortification: Human Life cannot be brought lower: For this is to assert its absolute Nothingness in a true and literal Sense.

But since this single Privilege, of knowing that they shall die, is the only one that the Living have above the Dead, what Use may be made of it? It is indeed but a little one; but since it is our All, let us make the most of it: And a great deal we may make of it: Though small, it is useful; infinitely more useful to us than any other Piece of Knowledge could be, however greater in itself, or more difficult to be come at.

Let us then at present bestow a few Moments upon this Subject; in the Consideration of which, our whole Lives would be well employed. Let us attend to the important Consequences which follow from the Knowledge of Death; let us see what Influence it should have upon us.—And this Knowledge has an Influence both upon our
present

present and future State: It naturally tends to make us pass through this World easy and composed, by inspiring us with a Contempt and Disregard for it; and to make us happy to all Eternity in the next, by powerfully exciting us to employ all our Care, Concern, Labour, and Industry, about it.

First. If the Living know that they shall die, this Knowledge should inspire them with a Contempt and Disregard for this World.

A Discourse on Death is properly introduced with a Preface on the Vanity of Life; for it serves, in some measure, to reconcile us to Death; it abates at least our Aversion, Death alone being a sufficient Proof of the Vanity of Life: Indeed it sums up the Argument, and concludes the Demonstration. Look but on a dying Man, and nothing is wanting either to convince the Judgment, or to strike the Imagination: For were the Pleasures of Life more solid and satisfactory, and the Pains and Uneasinesses of it more acute and pungent, than they really are; yet would the Consideration of their being finite take off not a little, both from the Enjoyment of the former, and the Misery of the latter. The Reflection, that all is to have an End, is such

a Damp on Pleasure, and such a Support in Pain, as almost destroys, in both Cases, the Sense of Feeling.

For how obvious is it thus to reason, What intrinsic Worth can there be in that which we are so soon to part with? Or, be its own Worth what it will, it can however, upon that Account, be but little esteemed by us. What signifies the transitory Pleasure, the fleeting Joy? However rapturous the Enjoyment, short-liv'd will that Rapture be. We can but taste, just taste, and no more. In a Moment it is gone, and we are left, as though it had never been. Nay these Pleasures leave us in a worse Condition than they found us; for they leave us mourning for their Loss: They allow us but just a Glimpse of them, as it were, only to make us regret their Absence. Why then any Care and Concern about so vanishing a Scene? Can a wise Man answer it to his Understanding, to bestow his Pains and Labour about such perishing Delights? It is astonishing, with what a serious Anxiety, and indefatigable Industry, we busy ourselves about that which hath no Continuance! How earnestly we set our Eyes upon that which is not! How attentively we weave
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the Spider's Web! And how unanimously we weary ourselves for very Vanity! A lasting Good deserves our Care: But to be so solicitous about the Attainment of what, the Moment after, we may lose, is unaccountable Stupidity. Our Life is always compared to the most fleeting and perishable Things; to the withering Grass; to the fading Flower; to the declining Shadow; to the momentary Vapour. And all these Comparisons we well know to be but too just. And if so, what avail all temporal Enjoyments? They must be as precarious as Life; for they cannot be more stable and permanent than their Foundation.

But is this Truth to be learned from our Conduct? Is the Shortness and Uncertainty of Life to be collected from our Indifference and Unconcernedness about it? No! our Projects do not look like the Projects of Man, whose Breath is in his Nostrils: On the contrary, one would imagine, that the Projectors thought they were to continue for ever. They are busied in making great Works, in building Houses and planting Vineyards; and, in the Insolence of their Hearts, calling their Lands after their own Names; as thinking,

no doubt, that their Houses shall continue for ever, and their Dwelling-places from Generation to Generation. They are grasping at Power, as if they meant to hold it; and wantonning in Pleasures, in an unreserved Manner, as never dreaming of parting with them.

But, alas! when the Breath of Man goeth forth, in that very Moment all his Thoughts perish, and he has no more a Portion for ever in any thing that is done under the Sun. All his mighty Enterprizes are at an End; all his Schemes brought to nought; he perishing for ever, without any regarding it.

Such is the winding up of all worldly Affairs, such their Conclusion. Death is a Baffler of all human Purposes: And since the Living know this, how can they spend their Strength for nought? Why will they labour after Riches, when they know that Death will let the wealthiest carry nothing away with them? Why after Splendor and Magnificence, when no Pomp will follow them? Why after Pleasures, when Death can snatch us from the most enchanting? Why after Power, when that same Death makes even the Monarch step down from his Throne?

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This Reasoning would hold good *, were we to be indulged in temporal Delights for a much longer Space than is now permitted us. Were we, instead of threescore or fourscore Years, to live thousands of Years, all would still be Vanity: Human Enjoyments would still be temporal and transitory, and consequently they would still be vain and unsatisfactory. But the Argument has an additional Force, from the present Shortness and Uncertainty of Life; the Precariousness of a Tenure lessening proportionably the Value of what is held by it.

How then is a wise Man to behave in this Affair? What will his Knowledge of Death direct him to? It will direct him to despise and disregard all worldly Enjoyments: It will make him sit loose and indifferent with respect to them: It will teach him to affect nothing mightily; not to be too fond of, or too much attached to, any earthly Thing;

* Were our Years to be multiplied by Millions, yet still Millions have an End, and therefore disappear before Eternity. They are like what the mathematical Philosophers call their infinitely little Quantities, which are said to be evanescent; that is, to be thrown quite out of the Account, without making any Difference in the Conclusion. Even therefore, on this Supposition, all would still be Vanity.

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that he may not live in Pain and Uneasiness at the Apprehension of losing it.

As the Knowledge of Death makes us thus careless and unconcerned as to the Goods of Life, so does it likewise most powerfully support us under the Evils and Pressures of it. As it takes off our Affections from the former, it keeps up our Spirits in spite of the latter. In the midst of the Sorrows which we have in our Hearts, this Reflection, that the Things concerning us have an End, never fails to refresh our Souls, and to pour Balm into our Wounds. However disagreeable the Thoughts of Death may be in Prosperity, certain it is, that nothing administers equal Comfort in Adversity. If in Prosperity we hate it, as an Enemy to our Pleasures, as a faithful Friend, we embrace it in Adversity. In all our Misfortunes, to it alone we fly for Refuge, and dig for it more than for hid Treasure. As the Servant earnestly desireth the Shadow, so do we desire Death, as a Retreat from the Burden and Heat of the Day. The Righteous with Patience endure the Contradiction of Sinners, because they know that ere long the Wicked shall cease from troubling. The Noise, and Business, and Hurry of Life, are
quietly

quietly submitted to, because the weary are soon to be at rest. The Servant could not subsist under the Cruelty and Tyranny of his Lord, did he not recollect, that there will be a Time when the Servant shall be free from his Master. Nor could the distressed and defenceless bear up under the Insolence of the rich and powerful, were they not convinced, that yet a little while, and they shall be where they will not hear the Voice of the Oppressor. This Reflection then, that Life is short and fleeting, that is, the Knowledge of Death, is a Support and Comfort under all the Pains, Wants, and Uneasinesses of Life; the sure and certain Expectation of future Ease lessening even the present Smart.

Were the wish'd-for End at a much greater distance than it is, yet still, so long as there is to be an End, Consolation might be drawn from it. But how is that Consolation improved by knowing that it is at hand? How do our Souls revive at the speedy Prospect of it?

Such are the Uses which natural Reason teaches us to make of the Knowledge of our Death: It teaches us to make it contribute to

the Ease and Quiet of our Life. So a Philosopher would argue from it.—But from Reason and Philosophy let us step on to Religion; and that, we shall find, will greatly improve the Subject, by suggesting to us still further and nobler Uses.

Natural Reason stops at the Grave; or, at least, its Way afterwards is so dark and comfortless, that there is not sufficient Encouragement to follow it. The Uses then which Reason deduces from our Knowledge of Death, affect chiefly our present State; are terminated principally within this Life.—But Religion disdains these narrow Bounds; it passes beyond the Grave: Through the Gate of Death, it leads us in open Day-light to Regions beyond it: It opens a new Scene; presents us with a new Prospect. In a Word, it informs us of another Life, unto which therefore its Care will extend.

The Knowledge of our leaving this Life, may in the Nature of the Thing be very reasonably supposed to have some Influence upon our Condition in the next; and Religion tells us that it has so, and a very great one too. Let us then examine what that Influence is; let us see what are the religious
Uses

Uses we should make of this Knowledge of Death. So it is that a *Christian* should argue from it.

If to die were only to cease to live; if, when we ceased to live here, we ceased to live at all; if, as the Memory of us is forgotten, so we ourselves were to have no Remembrance; if, as there is no Repentance hereafter, so there were no Consciousness neither; then indeed the Knowledge of our Death could be attended with no Consequences which could reach beyond the Grave. Upon this Supposition, it would be our wisest Way to conduct ourselves through Life in the Manner we thought most conducive to our Ease and Quiet; to make the best of a bad Bargain; and to give ourselves as little Vexation as may be about our fixed and unalterable Doom. Upon this Supposition, if we thought the Goods and Pleasures of this World worth the labouring and contending for, there could be no Reason assigned, why we should not gratify our Appetites to the full, pursue our Inclinations to the utmost. Nothing could indeed be better for us, than that we should make our Souls enjoy Good in our Labour.

But

But this is far from being the Truth of the Case : For though we live no longer in this World, yet we are alive for evermore in another. Though as to this World we are as though we had never been, yet in another we are treated according to what we have been here, Death being only a Passage into another Life ; a Life which shall have no End ; a Life which shall be happy or miserable, according to what we have done in this, whether it be good or bad.

To know that we shall die, is then properly to know that we shall one Day pass from this State into another : And since our Condition in that new World depends upon our Demeanour in this, the Use we should make of that Knowledge is, to stir ourselves up to a vigorous Discharge of all the Duties required of us ; to make us spare no Pains ; to make us exert all our Faculties ; to make us infinitely careful to secure a good Portion in that Life which is to come.—This is not a vain Thing ; not a Thing of little Moment or Consequence ; but it is an Affair of the utmost Concernment ; it is our Life : No less than eternal Happiness or Misery is in question. And surely great Pains need not be

be taken to engage your Attention, to animate your Endeavours, where so much is at stake. Happiness and Misery everlasting are enough to warm the coldest Temper, to rouse the most lethargic Disposition. Where these Motives fail, it is impossible for any thing else in Nature to influence. Here we have every thing which can be supposed to work upon a reasonable Being; every thing which can raise either his Hopes or his Fears.

Here are no vain and illusory Pleasures; every thing is solid, substantial, durable: No disappointed Hopes, no baffled Expectations here; no Place here for Want and Imperfection; The Gratification is full: Enjoyment, as it is above our Conceptions, exceeds our Expectations.—The Joys are in themselves complete and satisfying; nor do they suffer any Diminution from the Fear of losing them: Their Continuance is as infallible as their Excellence is inestimable. Their Continuance indeed is the Perfection of their Excellence: For were the Possession of them precarious, were it possible we could be deprived of them, the Misery of that Reflection would rise in proportion to the Value of the

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the Loss. This would be such an Abatement, as would not suffer even the Joys of Heaven to be satisfactory:

And as for the Evils of the future State, they are as dreadful as the Goods of it are desirable: They are too infinite in Degree, and endless in Duration. They are such in their own Nature, that the Thought of suffering them even but for a single Moment, is utterly insupportable. How then does the Horror rise, when we reflect that they are eternal? Were their Acuteness less keen; were their Intensity less violent; were they even to be ranked amongst the lowest and most trifling Pains we know of; yet, as long as they are everlasting, they will transcend in Misery all others, however bitterer and severer for the Time. But what shall we say, when to the most violent Degree the longest Duration is added, even a never-ending one? From whence can any Argument for Consolation be drawn? From what Quarter can any the least Ray of Comfort glance? No! there can be no Comfort, because there can be no Hope. Did Hell admit of Hope, it would for that Reason cease to be Hell; for
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the Condition of those in it would not be completely miserable, because their Case would not be desperate.

Need there be more said to raise our Fears? Need there more to convince us of the infinite Folly and Madness of running any the least Risk of incurring Punishments in every Light so hideous?—These are the Terrors of the Lord; and these are as frightful, as the Riches of his Goodness are inviting.

Call to Mind then these Things, O Man! whosoever thou art, that infinitely busies thyself in labouring for the Wind: Think for what thou risest up early, and fittest up late, and eatest the Bread of Carefulness; Think for what Trifles thou art solicitous; for what insignificant Baubles thou deprivest thy Soul of Good. And at the same time that thou art in such hot Pursuit of Things of no Value, think what an inestimable Treasure thou overlookest. If thou canst bestow so much Pains upon small Affairs, great ones surely deserve it more. Be uniform in thy Conduct; let thy Industry go through all thy Concerns; and do not act so perverse and so preposterous a Part, as thus to misplace thy Care; be not so *injudicious*: This thou canst
not

not answer to thy Understanding.—Think then what thou art doing, when with so much Care and Anxiety thou goest to the Farm and to the Merchandise, and for their Sakes darest to neglect and desert the Offices of Religion.—Thou art doing indeed no more than this; 'tis no great Matter; thou dost but give up an eternal Inheritance for a temporal one; thou art but forfeiting thy Interest in thy God, and consequently thy Title to his Heaven.—The same may be said to your Men of Pleasure; they do but forfeit substantial Happiness, and subject themselves to eternal Pains; for the sake of the vain, empty, perishable Enjoyments here on Earth.

Since then Death is attended with such infinite Consequences, to know that we shall die is a very useful and important Piece of Knowledge; and we would do well to remember, that it is such a Knowledge too, as leaves us without Excuse, if we are caught unprepared. Unexpected Evils are Misfortunes, and consequently do always render us Objects of Pity and Compassion: But when they are foreseen and foreknown; when we are apprised of the Danger, and yet take no Care to guard against it; in such Case, whatever

ever we suffer is *Desert*; and instead of Pity, we meet with Reproach and Contempt. Knowing therefore the Certainty of Death, let us look to it, that we provide against it. As Ignorance cannot be pleaded, nothing can be pleaded. No Pretences of worldly Business or worldly Pleasures will be admitted; no intended Resolutions of Amendment from Time to Time, suspended by affected Delays; no Surprise, no Death-bed Sighs and Tears, by way of Compensation for an earlier Preparation: No! one Reply will evince the Folly of all such Excuses; all Mouths will be stopped by this one Question, *Did you know that you were to die?*

Surely we know it, but how little do we regard it? How little indeed, when we see Numbers in such Hurry, and Flutter, and Confusion, and Surprise, upon their Death-beds, as if that were the first Time they had ever heard of it!—Certainly we do not want Opportunities enough of being put in mind of it. Every Day affords us too many; Thousands are continually falling before us, and ten Thousands at our right Hands; and every now and then we have Warnings and Alarms within ourselves.

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The Misfortune is, that we always look upon Death as a disagreeable Object: We consider it as the Bane of our present Pleasures, and as the King of future Terrors; and therefore we precipitately fly from him. — But if we could so far prevail upon ourselves, as to stop but for a Moment, it would be natural to reflect, that with whatever Speed we may run, we shall be sure to be overtaken; and that therefore Flight is needless, because Escape is impossible. Prudence then would direct us not to fly from what cannot be avoided, but rather to endeavour to reconcile ourselves to it; to see whether we cannot order Things so, as that it should become less horrible and frightful. This we may do successfully: Familiarity and Acquaintance naturally lessen Horror. The most deformed Objects gradually lose of their Deformity, as we grow conversant with them; and in Time they become even pleasing. Let us take this Method with Death; let us think of him daily, hourly, continually: Our Concern at the Sight of him will abate in proportion to the Frequency of our Visits; and the more we are acquainted with him, the better we shall like him. Familiarity
with

with Death will unavoidably lead us to prepare for the meeting it: For it seems impossible to be frequently reflecting upon the Consequences of it, without being very powerfully moved by them; and it is the being prepared, that can alone make it agreeable.

To conclude: As then we know that we shall die, it is our Wisdom to consider our latter End; to add Meditation to our Knowledge; and by that means to make that Knowledge have its due Effect and Influence on our Lives and Conversations. Which that we may all do, God of his infinite Mercy grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord: To whom, &c.

T H E E N D.



E R R A T A

V O L. I.

Page 26. Line 26. for *their* read *his*.

Page 184. Line 5. for *them* read *Men*.

V O L. II.

Page 2. Line 8. for *making of it*, read *making it*.

Page 28. Line 11. for *met* read *meet*.

Page 113. Line 9. for *to proceed*, read *proceed*.

J. B. A. T. A.

V O L. I.

Page 25. Line 20. for this read his.
Page 181. Line 2. for then read when.

V O L. II.

Page 25. Line 2. for making of the read making of.
Page 25. Line 11. for was read were.
Page 181. Line 2. for then read when.

